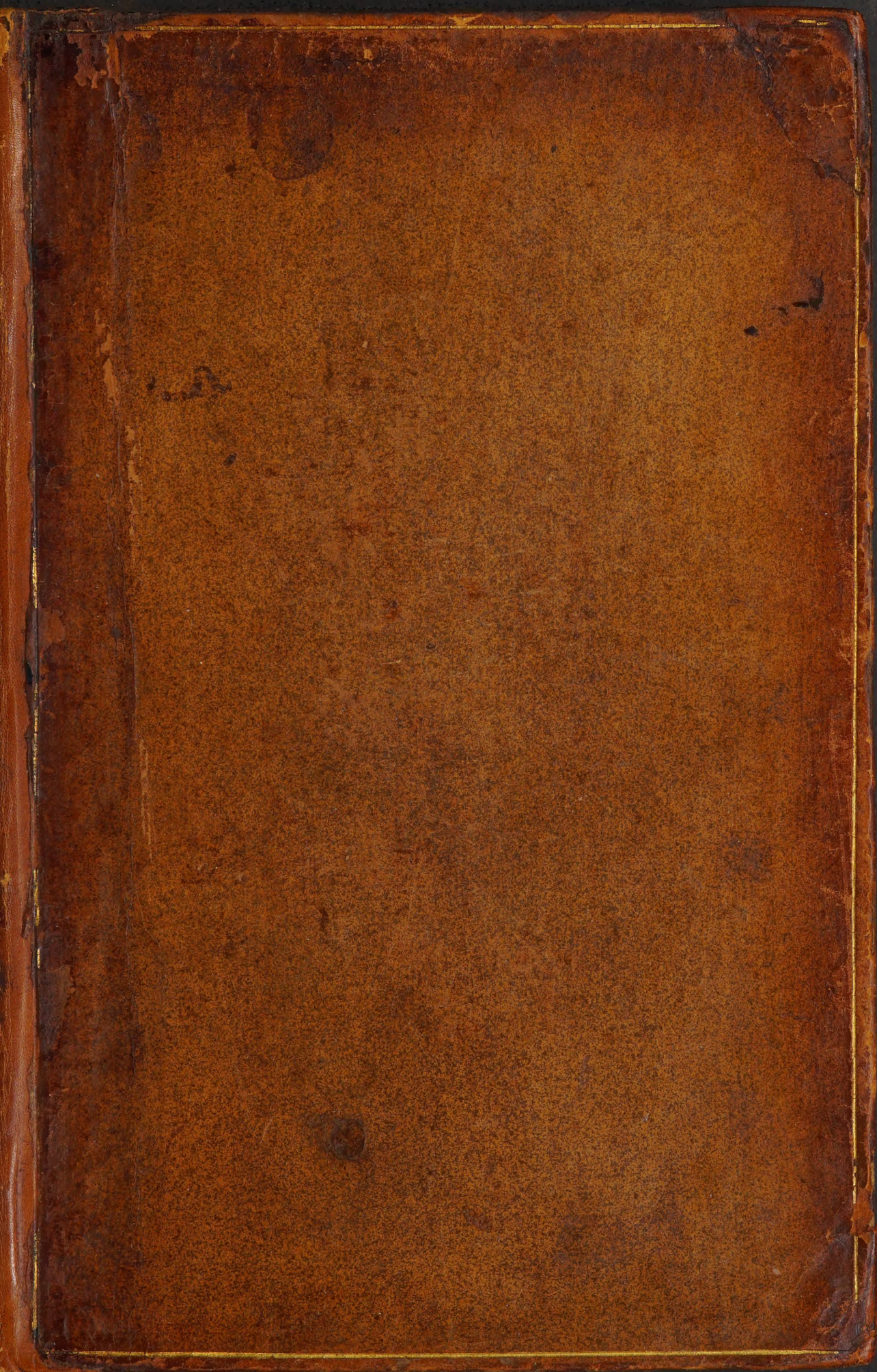






CHAUCER

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II.

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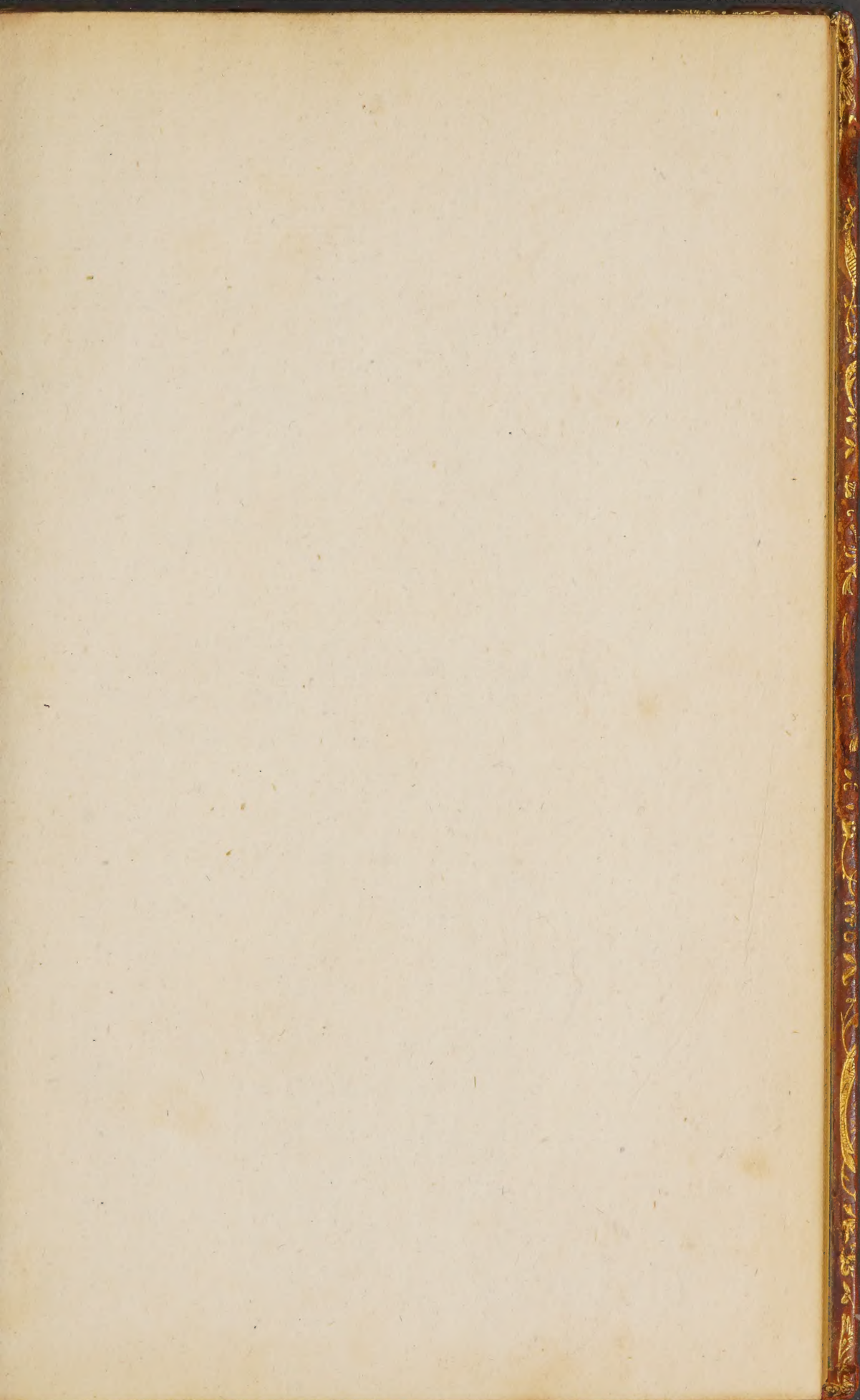




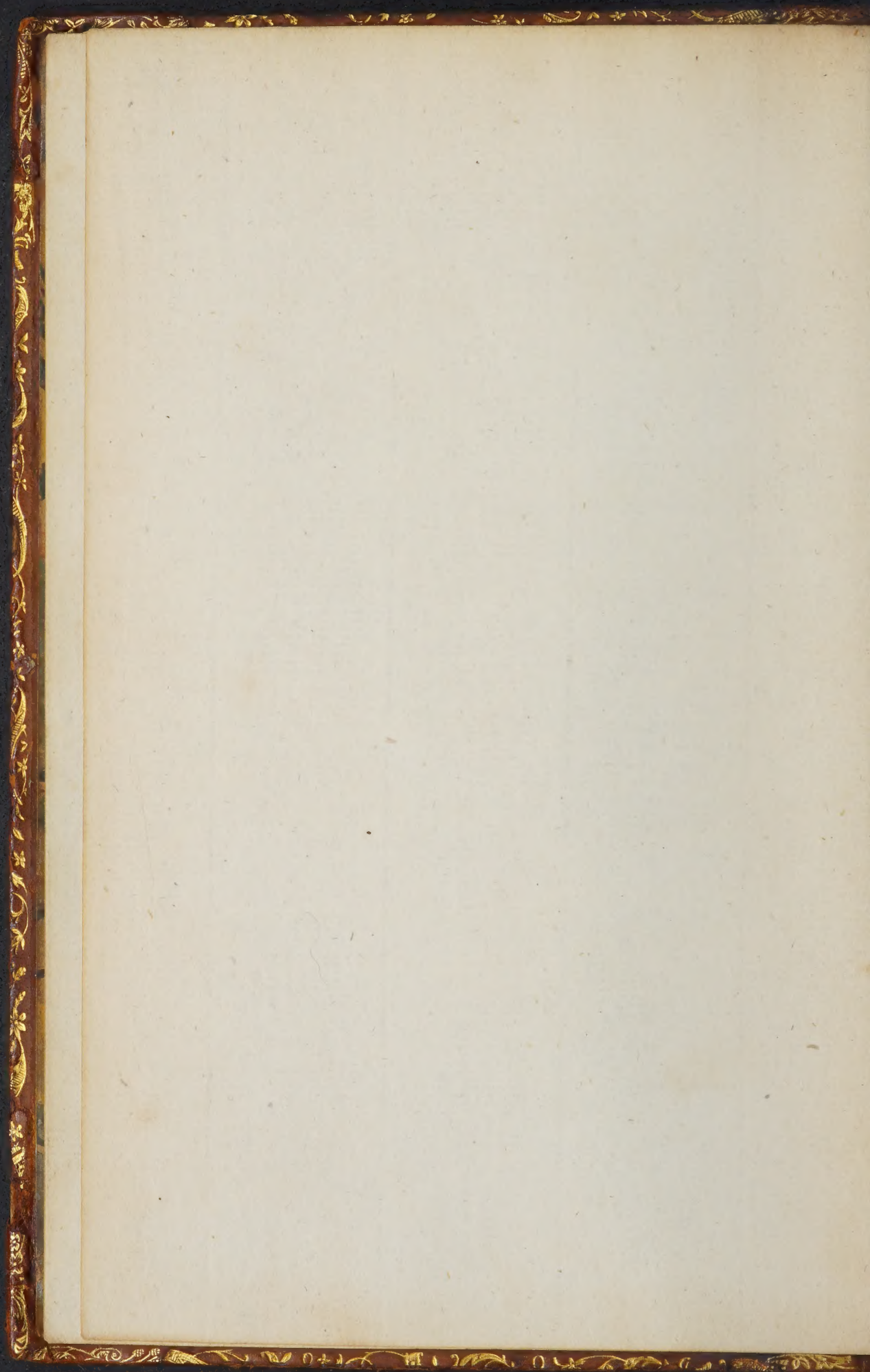


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THE  
CANTERBURY TALES  
OF  
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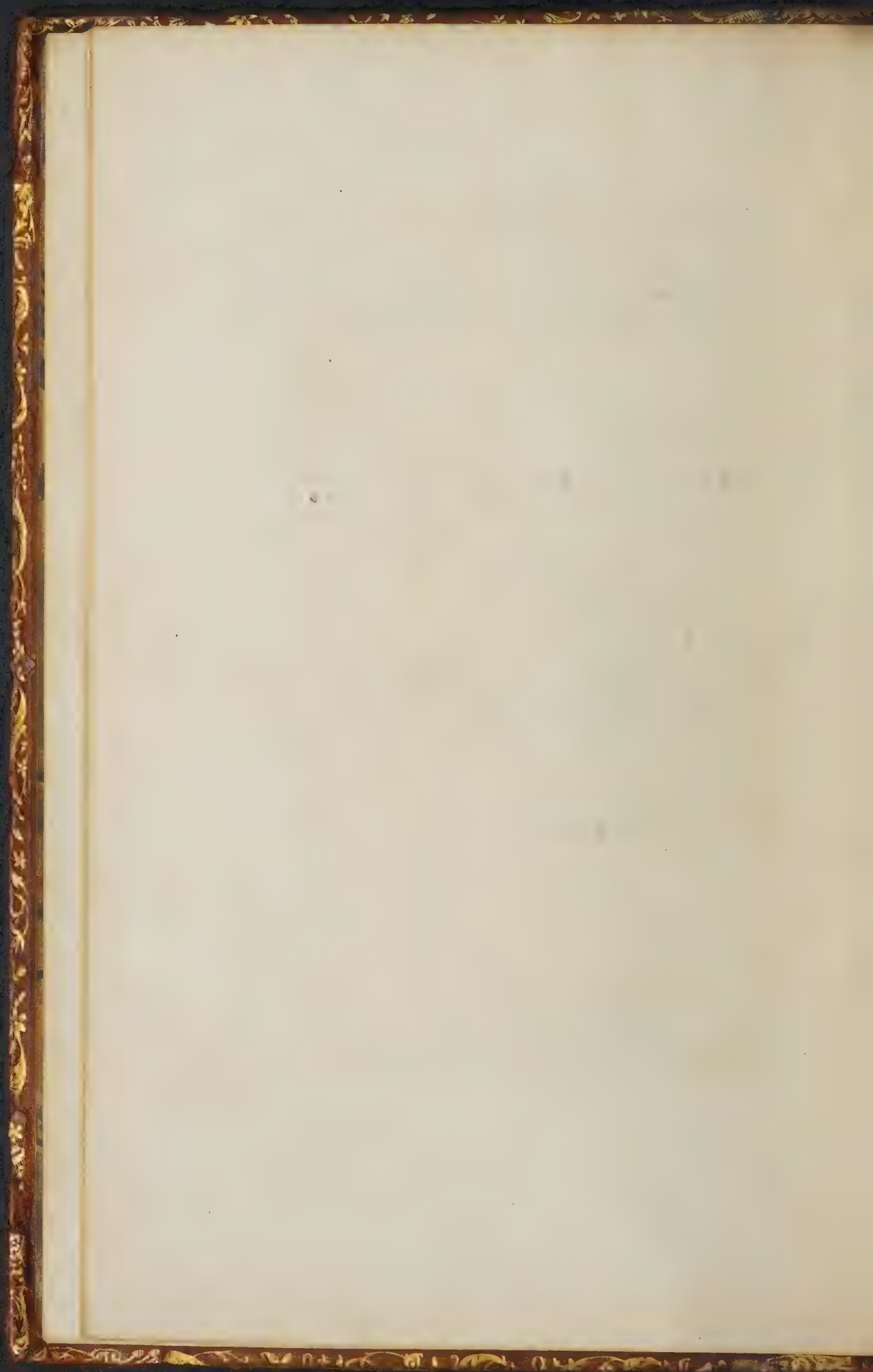
To which are added,

An ESSAY upon his LANGUAGE and  
VERSIFICATION; an INTRODUCTORY  
DISCOURSE; and NOTES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N,  
Printed for T. PAYNE, at the Mews-gate.  
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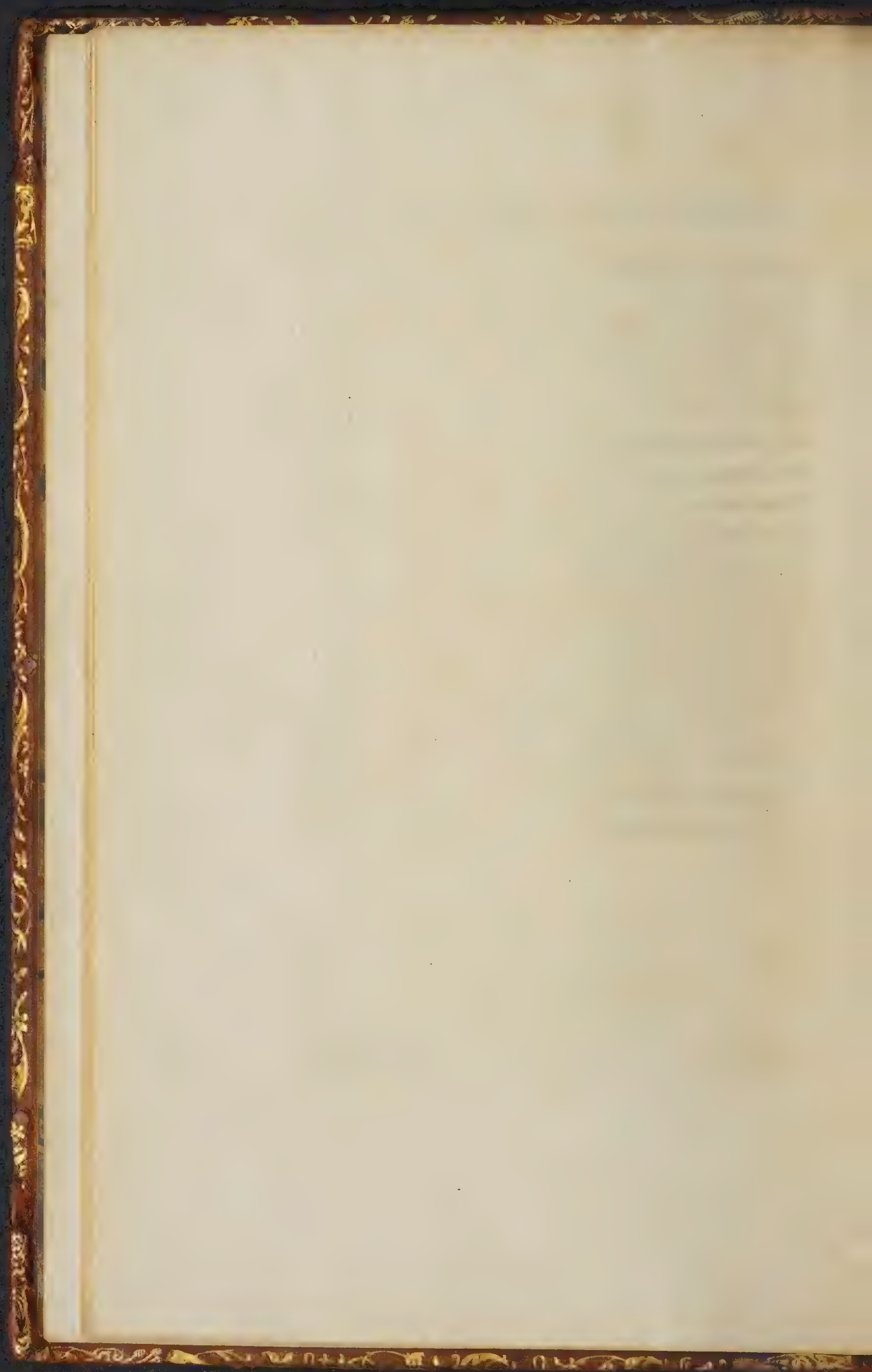




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THE  
CANTERBURY TALES.

THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

SIRE Clerk of Oxenforde, our hofte faid,  
Ye ride as stille and coy, as doth a maid,  
Were newe spoused, fitting at the bord :  
This day ne herd I of your tonge a word. 7880

I trow ye studie abouten fom fophime :  
But Salomon faith, that every thing hath time.  
For Goddes fake as beth of better chere,  
It is no time for to studien here.

Tell us fom mery tale by your fay ;  
For what man that is entred in a play,  
He nedes most unto the play affent.  
But precheth not, as freres don in Lent,  
To make us for our olde finnes wepe,  
Ne that thy tale make us not to flepe. 7890

Tell us fom mery thing of adventures,  
Your termes, your coloures, and your figures,  
Kepe hem in ftore, til fo be ye endite  
Hie ftile, as whan that men to kinges write.  
Speketh fo plain at this time, I you pray,  
That we may underftonden what ye fay.

This worthy Clerk benignely answerde ;  
Hofte, quod he, I am under your yerde,



## 2 THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

Ye have of us as now the governance,  
And therefore wolde I do you obeyfance, 7900  
As fer as reson asketh hardely :

I wol you tell a tale, which that I  
Lerned at Padowe, of a worthy clerk,  
As preved by his wordes and his werk.  
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste,  
I pray to God so yeve his soule reſte.

Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,  
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike ſwete  
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,  
As Lynyan did of philosophie, 7910  
Or law, or other art particulere :

But deth, that wol not ſuffre us dwellen here,  
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,  
Heim both hath ſlaine, and alle we ſhul dye.

But forth to tellen of this worthy man,  
That taughte me this tale, as I began,  
I ſay that firſt he with hie ſtile enditeth  
(Or he the body of his tale writeth)

A proheme, in the which deſcriveth he  
Piemont, and of Saluces the contree, 7920  
And ſpeketh of Apennin the hilles hie,  
That ben the boundes of weſt Lumbardie :  
And of mount Veſulus in ſpecial,  
Wher as the Poo out of a welle ſmal

Taketh

THE CLERKES TALE.

3

Taketh his firſte ſpringing and his ſours,  
That eſtward ay encreſeth in his cours  
To Emelie ward, to Ferare, and Veniſe,  
The which a longe thing were to deviſe.  
And trewely, as to my jugement,  
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent, 7930  
Save that he wol conveyen his matere :  
But this is the tale which that ye mow here.

THE CLERKES TALE.

Ther is right at the Weſt ſide of Itaille  
Doun at the rote of Veſulus the cold,  
A luſty plain, habundant of vitaille,  
Ther many a toun and tour thou maiſt behold,  
That founded were in time of fathers old,  
And many another delitable fighte,  
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markis whilom lord was of that lond, 7940  
As were his worthy elders him before,  
And obeysant, ay redy to his hond,  
Were all his lieges, bothe leſſe and more :  
Thus in delit he liveth, and hath don yore,  
Beloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,  
Both of his lordes, and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to ſpeken of linage,  
The gentileſt yborne of Lumbardie,

B 2

A faire



4 THE CLERKES TALE.

A faire person, and strong, and yong of age,  
And ful of honour and of curtesie : 7950  
Discret ynough, his contree for to gie,  
Sauf in som thinges that he was to blame,  
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought  
In time coming what might him betide,  
But on his lust present was all his thought,  
And for to hauke and hunt on every side :  
Wel neigh all other cures let he slide,  
And eke he n'old (and that was worst of all)  
Wedden no wif for ought that might befall. 7960

Only that point his peple bare so fore,  
That flockmel on a day to him they went,  
And on of hem, that wifest was of lore,  
(Or elles that the lord wold best assent  
That he shuld tell him what the peple ment,  
Or elles coud he wel shew swiche matere)  
He to the markis said as ye shull here.

O noble markis, your humanitee  
Assureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,  
As oft as time is of necessitee,  
That we to you mow tell our hevinesse :  
Accepteth, lord, than of your gentillesse,

7970  
That

That we with pitous herte unto you plaine,  
And let your eres nat my vois disdaine.

Al have I not to don in this matere  
More than another man hath in this place,  
Yet for as moch as ye, my lord so dere,  
Han alway shewed me favour and grace,  
I dare the better aske of you a space  
Of audience, to shewen our request, 7980  
And ye, my lord, to don right as you lest.

For certes, lord, so wel us liketh you  
And all your werke, and ever have don, that we  
Ne couden not ourself devisen how  
We mighten live in more felicitee :  
Save o thing, lord, if it your wille be,  
That for to be a wedded man you lest,  
Than were your peple in foverain hertes rest.

Boweth your nekke under the blisful yok  
Of foveraintee, and not of servise, 7990  
Which that men clepen spoufaile or wedlok :  
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,  
How that our dayes passe in sondry wise ;  
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ride,  
Ay fleth the time, it wol no man abide.



And though your grene youthe floure as yet,  
 In crepeth age alway as still as ston,  
 And deth manafeth every age, and finit  
 In eche estat, for ther escapeth non :  
 And al so certain, as we knowe eche on 8000  
 That we shul die, as uncertain we all  
 Ben of that day whan deth shal on us fall.

Accepteth than of us the trewe entent,  
 That never yet refuseden your hest,  
 And we wol, lord, if that ye wol assent,  
 Chese you a wife in short time at the mest,  
 Borne of the gentillest and of the best  
 Of all this lond, so that it oughte seme  
 Honour to God and you, as we can deme.

Deliver us out of all this besy drede, 8010  
 And take a wif, for highe Goddes sake :  
 For if it so befell, as God forbede,  
 That thurgh your deth your lineage shulde flake,  
 And that a strange successour shuld take  
 Your heritage, o ! wo were us on live :  
 Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive.

Hir meke praiere and hir pitous chere  
 Made the markis for to han pitee.

Ye

Ye wol, quod he, min owen peple dere,  
 To that I never er thought constrainen me. 8020  
 I me rejoyced of my libertee,  
 That felden time is found in mariage;  
 Ther I was free, I moſte ben in ſervage.

But natheles I ſee your trewe entent,  
 And truſt upon your wit, and have don ay :  
 Wherefore of my free will I wol aſſent  
 To wedden me, as ſone as ever I may.  
 But ther as ye han profred me to-day  
 To cheſen me a wif, I you releſe  
 That choiſ, and pray you of that profer ceſe. 8030

For God it wot, that children often ben  
 Unlike hir worthy eldres hem before,  
 Bountee cometh al of God, not of the ſtren,  
 Of which they ben ygendred and ybore :  
 I truſt in Goddes bountee, and therfore  
 My mariage, and min eſtat, and reſt  
 I him betake, he may don as him leſt.

Let me alone in cheſing of my wif,  
 That charge upon my bak I wol endure :  
 But I you pray, and charge upon your liſ, 8040  
 That what wif that I take, ye me aſſure



8 THE CLERKES TALE.

To worship hire while that hire lif may dure,  
In word and werk both here and elles where,  
As she an emperoures doughter were.

And forthermore this shuln ye fwere, that ye  
Again my chois shul never grutch ne strive.  
For sith I shal forgo my libertee  
At your request, as ever mote I thrive,  
Ther as min herte is set, ther wol I wive :  
And but ye wol assent in swiche manere,  
I pray you speke no more of this matere, 8050

With hertly will they sworn and assenten  
To all this thing, ther saide not o wight nay :  
Beseching him of grace, or that they wenten,  
That he wold granten hem a certain day  
Of his spoufaile, as sone as ever he may,  
For yet alway the peple somwhat dred,  
Lest that this markis wolde no wif wed.

He granted hem a day, swiche as him lest,  
On which he wold be wedded sikerly, 8060  
And said he did all this at hir request ;  
And they with humble herte ful buxumly  
Kneling upon hir knees ful reverently  
Him thonken all, and thus they han an end  
Of hir entente, and home agen they wend.

And

And hereupon he to his officeres  
Commandeth for the feste to purvay.  
And to his privee knightes and squieres  
Swiche charge he yave, as him list on hem lay :  
And they to his commandement obey, 8070  
And eche of hem doth al his diligence  
To do unto the feste al reverence.

*Pars secunda.*

Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable,  
Wher as this markis shope his mariage,  
Ther stood a thorpe, of fighte delitable,  
In which that poure folk of that village  
Hadden hir bestes and hir herbergage,  
And of hir labour toke hir sustenance,  
After that the erthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man, 8080  
Which that was holden pourest of hem all :  
But highe God somtime senden can  
His grace unto a litel oxes stall :  
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.  
A doughter had he, faire ynough to fight,  
And Grifildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,  
Than was she on the fairest under sonne :

Fu1



10 THE CLERKES TALE.

Ful pourely yfostred up was she :  
 No likerous lust was in hire herte yronne : 8090  
 Wel ofter of the well than of the tonne  
 She dranke, and for she wolde vertue plese,  
 She knew wel labour, but non idel ese.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,  
 Yet in the brest of hire virginitee  
 Ther was enclosed sad and ripe corage :  
 And in gret reverence and charitee  
 Hire olde poure fader fostred she :  
 A few sheep spinning on the feld she kept,  
 She wolde not ben idel til she slept. 8100

And whan she homward came, she wolde bring  
 Wortes and other herbes times oft,  
 The which she shred and sethe for hire living,  
 And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing soft :  
 And ay she kept hire fadres lif on lost  
 With every obeisance and diligence,  
 That child may don to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this poure creature,  
 Ful often sithe this markis sette his eye,  
 As he on hunting rode paraventure : 8110  
 And whan it fell that he might hire espie,  
 He

He not with wanton loking of folie  
His eyen cast on hire, but in sad wise  
Upon hire chere he wold him oft avise,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,  
And eke hire vertue, passing any wight  
Of so yong age, as wel in chere as dede.  
For though the peple have no gret insight  
In vertue, he considered ful right  
Hire bountee, and disposed that he wold 8120  
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden shold.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can  
Tellen what woman that it shulde be,  
For which mervaille wondred many a man,  
And saiden, whan they were in privetee,  
Wol not our lord yet leve his vanitee?  
Wol he not wedde? alas, alas the while!  
Why wol he thus himself and us begile?

But natheles this markis hath do make  
Of gemmes, fette in gold and in asure, 8130  
Broches and ringes, for Grisildes sake,  
And of hire clothing toke he the mesure  
Of a maiden like unto hire stature,  
And eke of other ornamentes all,  
That unto swiche a wedding shulde fall.

The



12 THE CLERKES TALE.

The time of underne of the same day  
 Approcheth, that this wedding shulde be,  
 And all the paleis put was in array,  
 Both halle and chambres, eche in his degree,  
 Houses of office stuffed with plentee 8140  
 Ther mayst thou see of deinteous vitaille,  
 That may be found, as fer as lasteth Itaille.

This real markis richely arraide,  
 Lordes and ladies in his compaignie,  
 The which unto the feste weren praide,  
 And of his retenue the bachelerie,  
 With many a soun of sondry melodie,  
 Unto the village, of the which I told,  
 In this array the righte way they hold.

Grifilde of this (God wot) ful innocent, 8150  
 That for hire shapen was all this array,  
 To fetchen water at a welle is went,  
 And cometh home as sone as ever she may.  
 For wel she had herd say, that thilke day  
 The markis shulde wedde, and if she might,  
 She wolde fayn han seen som of that fight.

She thought I wol with other maidens stond,  
 That ben my felawes, in our dore and fee

The

THE CLERKES TALE. 13

The markifesse, and therto wol I fond  
 To don at home, as sone as it may be, 8160  
 The labour which that longeth unto me,  
 And than I may at leifer hire behold,  
 If she this way unto the castel hold.

And as she wolde over the threswold gon,  
 The markis came and gan hire for to call,  
 And she set down hire water-pot anon  
 Beside the threswold in an oxes stall,  
 And doun upon hire knees she gan to fall,  
 And with sad countenance kneleth still,  
 Til she had herd what was the lordes will. 8170

This thoughtful markis spake unto this maid  
 Ful soberly, and said in this manere :  
 Wher is your fader, Grisildis ? he said.  
 And she with reverence in humble chere  
 Answered, lord, he is al redy here.  
 And in she goth withouten lenger lette,  
 And to the markis she hire fader fette.

He by the hond than toke this poure man,  
 And saide thus, whan he him had aside :  
 Janicola, I neither may ne can 8180  
 Lenger the plesance of min herte hide,  
 If that thou vouchesauf, what so betide  
 Thy



14 THE CLERKES TALE.

Thy doughter wol I take or that I wend  
As for my wif, unto hire lives end.

Thou lovest me, that wot I wel certain,  
And art my faithful liegeman ybore,  
And all that liketh me, I dare wel fain  
It liketh thee, and specially therfore  
Tell me that point, that I have said before,  
If that thou wolt unto this purpos drawe, 8190  
To taken me as for thy son in lawe.

This soden cas this man astoned so,  
That red he wex, abaist, and al quaking  
He stood, unnethes said he wordes mo,  
But only thus; Lord, quod he, my willing  
Is as ye wol, ne ageins your liking  
I wol no thing, min owen lord so dere,  
Right as you list, governeth this matere.

Than wol I, quod this markis softely,  
That in thy chambre, I, and thou, and she, 8200  
Have a collation, and wost thou why?  
For I wol ask hire, if it hire wille be  
To be my wif, and reule hire after me:  
And all this shal be doni in thy presence,  
I wol not speke out of thin audience.

And

And in the chambre, while they were aboute  
 The tretee, which as ye shul after here,  
 The peple came into the hous withoute,  
 And wondred hem, in how honest manere  
 Ententifly she kept hire fader dere : 8210  
 But utterly Grifildis wonder might,  
 For never erst ne saw she swiche a fight.

No wonder is though that she be astoned,  
 To see so gret a gest come in that place,  
 She never was to non swiche gestes woned,  
 For which she lokyd with ful pale face.  
 But shortly forth this matere for to chace,  
 Thise arn the wordes that the markis said  
 To this benigne, veray, faithful maid.

Grifilde, he said, ye shuln wel understond, 8220  
 It liketh to your fader and to me,  
 That I you wedde, and eke it may so stond  
 As I suppose, ye wol that it so be :  
 But thise demaundes aske I first (quod he)  
 That fin it shal be don in hasty wise,  
 Wol ye assent, or elles you avise?

I say this, be ye redy with good herte  
 To all my lust, and that I freely may  
 As me best thinketh do you laugh or smerte,

And



16 THE CLERKES TALE.

And never ye to grutchen, night ne day, 8230  
 And eke whan I say ya, ye say not nay,  
 Neither by word, ne frowning countenance?  
 Swere this, and here I swere our alliance.

Wondring upon this thing, quaking for drede,  
 She saide; Lord, indigne and unworthy  
 Am I, to thilke honour, that ye me bede,  
 But as ye wol yourself, right so wol I:  
 And here I swere, that never willingly  
 In werk, ne thought, I n'ill you disobeie  
 For to be ded, though me were loth to deie. 8240

This is ynough, Grifilde min, quod he.  
 And forth he goth with a ful sobre chere,  
 Out at the dore, and after than came she,  
 And to the peple he said in this manere:  
 This is my wif, quod he, that stondeth here.  
 Honoureth her, and loveth hire, I pray,  
 Who so me loveth, ther n'is no more to say.

And for that nothing of hire olde gere  
 She shulde bring into his hous, he bad  
 That women shuld despoilen hire right there, 8250  
 Of which thise ladies weren nothing glad  
 To handle hire clothes wherin she was clad:

But

But natheles this maiden bright of hew  
Fro foot to hed they clothed han all new.

Hire heres han they kempt, that lay untressed  
Ful rudely, and with hir fingres smal  
A coroune on hire hed they han ydressed,  
And sette hire ful of nouches gret and smal :  
Of hire array what shuld I make a tale ?  
Unneth the peple hire knew for hire fairnesse, 8260  
Whan she transmewed was in swiche richesse.

This markis hath hire spoused with a ring  
Brought for the same cause, and than hire sette  
Upon an hors snow-white, and wel ambling,  
And to his paleis, or he lenger lette,  
(With joyful peple, that hire lad and mette)  
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende  
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,  
I say, that to this newe markisesse 8270  
God hath swiche favour sent hire of his grace,  
That it ne semeth not by likelinessse  
That she was borne and fed in rudenessse,  
As in a cote, or in an oxes stall,  
But nourished in an emperoures hall.



To every wight she waxen is so dere,  
 And worshipful, that folk ther she was bore,  
 And fro hire birthe knew hire yere by yere,  
 Unnethes trowed they, but dorst han swore,  
 That to Janicle, of which I spake before, 8280  
 She doughter n'as, for as by conjecture  
 Hem thoughte she was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was she,  
 She was encresed in swiche excellence  
 Of thewes good, yset in high bountee,  
 And so discrete, and faire of eloquence,  
 So benigne, and so digne of reverence,  
 And coude so the peples herte embrace,  
 That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face.

Not only of Saluces in the toun 8290  
 Published was the bountee of hire name,  
 But eke beside in many a regioun,  
 If on faith wel, another faith the fame :  
 So spredeth of hire hie bountee the fame,  
 That men and women, yong as wel as old,  
 Gon to Saluces upon hire to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but really,  
 Wedded with fortunat honestete,  
 In Goddes pees liveth ful esily

At

At home, and grace ynough outward had he : 8300  
 And for he saw that under low degree  
 Was honest vertue hid, the peple him held  
 A prudent man, and that is seen ful feld.

Not only this Grifildis thurgh hire wit  
 Coude all the fete of wifly homlineffe,  
 But eke whan that the cas required it,  
 The comune profit coude she redresse :  
 Ther n'as discord, rancour, ne hevinesse  
 In all the lond, that she ne coude appese,  
 And wifely bring hem all in hertes ese. 8310

Though that hire husbond absent were or non,  
 If gentilmen, or other of that contree  
 Were wroth, she wolde bringen hem at on,  
 So wise and ripe wordes hadde she,  
 And jugement of so gret equitee,  
 That she from heaven sent was, as men wend,  
 Peple to save, and every wrong to amend.

Not longe time after that this Grifilde  
 Was wedded, she a doughter hath ybore,  
 All had hire lever han borne a knave childe : 8320  
 Glad was the markis and his folk therfore,  
 For though a maiden childe come all before,



20 THE CLERKES TALE.

She may unto a knave child atteine  
By likelyhed, for she n'is not barreine.

*Pars tertia.*

Ther fell, as it befalleth times mo,  
Whan that this childe had souked but a throwe,  
This markis in his herte longed so  
To tempt his wif, hire sadnesse for to knowe,  
That he ne might out of his herte throwe  
This marveillous desir his wif to assay, 8330  
Needles, God wot, he thought hire to affray.

He had assaied hire ynough before,  
And found hire ever good, what nedeth it  
Hire for to tempt, and alway more and more ?  
Though som men praise it for a subtil wit,  
But as for me, I say that evil it fit  
To assay a wif whan that it is no nede,  
And putten hire in anguish and in drede.

For which this markis wrought in this manere ;  
He came a-night alone ther as she lay 8340  
With sterne face, and with ful trouble chere,  
And sayde thus ; Grisilde, (quod he) that day  
That I you toke out of your poure array,  
And put you in estat of high noblesse,  
Ye han it not forgotten, as I gesse.

I say,

I say, Grifilde, this present dignitee,  
 In which that I have put you, as I trow,  
 Maketh you not forgetful for to be  
 That I you toke in poure estat ful low,  
 For ony wele ye mote yourselven know. 8350  
 Take hede of every word that I you say,  
 Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tway.

Ye wote yourself wel how that ye came here  
 Into this hous, it is not long ago,  
 And though to me ye be right lefe and dere,  
 Unto my gentils ye be nothing so :  
 They say, to hem it is gret shame and wo  
 For to be suggetes, and ben in servage  
 To thee, that borne art of a smal linage.

And namely fin thy doughter was ybore, 8360  
 Thise wordes han they spoken douteles,  
 But I desire, as I have don before,  
 To live my lif with hem in rest and pees :  
 I may not in this cas be reccheles ;  
 I mote do with thy doughter for the best,  
 Not as I wold, but as my gentils left.

And yet, God wote, this is ful loth to me :  
 But natheles withouten youre weting



22 THE CLERKES TALE.

I wol nought do, but thus wol I (quod he)  
 That ye to me assenten in this thing. 8370  
 Shew now youre patience in youre werking,  
 That ye me hight and swore in youre village  
 The day that maketh was our mariage,

Whan she had herd all this, she not ameved  
 Neyther in word, in chere, ne countenance,  
 (For as it semed, she was not agreved)  
 She sayde; Lord, all lith in your plesance,  
 My child and I, with hertely obeisance  
 Ben youre all, and ye may save or spill,  
 Your owen thing: werketh after your will. 8380

Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,  
 Like unto you, that may displese me:  
 Ne I desire nothing for to have,  
 Ne drede for to lese, sauf only ye:  
 This will is in myn herte, and ay shal be,  
 No length of time, or deth may this deface,  
 Ne change my corage to an other place,

Glad was this markis for hire answering,  
 But yet he feined as he were not so,  
 Al dreery was his chere and his loking, 8390  
 Whan that he shuld out of the chambre go.  
 Sone after this, a furlong way or two,

He

He prively hath told all his entent  
Unto a man, and to his wif him fent.

A maner fergeant was this prive man,  
The which he faithful often founden had  
In thinges gret, and eke fwiche folk wel can  
Don execution on thinges bad :  
The lord knew wel, that he him loved and drad.  
And whan this fergeant wist his lordes will, 8400  
Into the chambre he stalked him ful still.

Madame, he fayd, ye mote foryeve it me,  
Though I do thing, to which I am conftreined ;  
Ye ben so wise, that right wel knownen ye,  
That lordes hestes may not ben yfeined,  
They may wel be bewailed and complained,  
But men mote nedes to hir lust obey,  
And so wol I, ther n'is no more to fay.

This child I am commanded for to take.  
And spake no more, but out the child he hent 8410  
Despitoufly, and gan a chere to make,  
As though he wold have flain it, or he went.  
Grifildis most al suffer and al consent :  
And as a lambe, she fitteth meke and still,  
And let this cruel fergeant do his will,



24 THE CLERKES TALE.

Suspecious was the diffame of this man,  
 Suspect his face, suspect his word also,  
 Suspect the time in which he this began :  
 Alas ! hire doughter, that she loved so,  
 She wende he wold han flaien it right tho, 8420  
 But natheles she neither wept ne fiked,  
 Conforming hire to that the markis liked,

But at the last to speken she began,  
 And mekely she to the sergeant praid  
 (So as he was a worthy gentil man)  
 That she might kisse hire child, or that it deid :  
 And in hire barme this litel child she leid,  
 With ful sad face, and gan the child to blisse,  
 And lulled it, and after gan it kisse.

And thus she sayd in hire benigne vois : 8430  
 Farewel, my child, I shal thee never see,  
 But sin I have thee marked with the crois,  
 Of thilke fader yblessed mote thou be,  
 That for us died upon a crois of tree :  
 Thy soule, litel child, I him betake,  
 For this night shalt thou dien for my sake.

I trow that to a norice in this cas  
 It had ben hard this routhe for to see :

Wel

THE CLERKES TALE. 25

Wel might a moder than han cried alas,  
 But natheles so fad stedfast was she, 8440  
 That she endured all adversitee,  
 And to the fergeant mekely she sayde,  
 Have here agen your litel yonge mayde.

Goth now (quod she) and doth my lordes hest :  
 And o thing wold I pray you of your grace,  
 But if my lord forbade you at the lest,  
 Burieth this litel body in som place,  
 That bestes ne no briddes it to-race.  
 But he no word to that purpos wold say,  
 But toke the child and went upon his way. 8450

This fergeant came unto his lord again,  
 And of Grifildes wordes and hire chere  
 He told him point for point, in short and plain,  
 And him presented with his doughter dere.  
 Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,  
 But natheles his purpos held he still,  
 As lordes don, whan they wol have hir will,

And bad this fergeant that he prively  
 Shulde this child ful softe wind and wrappe,  
 With alle circumstances tendrely, 8460  
 And carry it in a cofre, or in a lappe ;  
 But upon peine his hed of for to swappe  
 That



That no man shulde know of his entent,  
Ne whens he came, ne whider that he went ;

But at Boloigne, unto his suster dere,  
That thilke time of Pavie was countesse,  
He shuld it take, and shew hire this matere,  
Beseching hire to don hire besinesse  
This child to fostren in all gentillesse,  
And whos child that it was he bade hire hide 8470  
From every wight, for ought that may betide,

This fergeant goth, and hath fulfild this thing.  
But to this marquis now retorne we ;  
For now goth he ful fast imagining,  
If by his wives chere he mighte see,  
Or by hire wordes apperceive, that she  
Were changed, but he never coud hire finde,  
But ever in on ylike fad and kinde.

As glad, as humble, as besy in service  
And eke in love, as she was wont to be, 8480  
Was she to him, in every maner wise ;  
Ne of hire doughter not a word spake she :  
Non accident for non adverfitee  
Was seen in hire, ne never hire doughters name  
Ne nevened she, for earnest ne for game.

*Pars quarta.*

In this estat ther passed ben foure yere  
Er she with childe was, but as God wold,  
A knave childe she bare by this Waltere  
Ful gracious, and fair for to behold :  
And whan that folk it to his fader told, 8490  
Not only he, but all his contree mery  
Was for this childe, and God they thonke and hery.

Whan it was two yere old, and from the brest  
Departed of his norice, on a day  
This markis caughte yet another left  
To tempte his wif yet ofter, if he may.  
O! nedeles was she tempted in assay.  
But wedded men ne connen no mesure,  
Whan that they finde a patient creature,

Wif, quod this markis, ye han herd or this 8500  
My peple fikelly beren our mariage,  
And namely fin my sone yboren is,  
Now is it werse than ever in al our age :  
The murmur fleth myn herte and my corage,  
For to myn eres cometh the vois so finerte,  
That it wel nie destroyed hath myn herte.

Now



Now say they thus, whan Walter is agon,  
 Than shal the blood of Janicle succede,  
 And ben our lord, for other han we non :  
 Swiche wordes fayn my peple, it is no drede. 8510  
 Wel ought I of swiche murmur taken hede,  
 For certainly I drede al swiche sentence,  
 Though they not plainen in myn audience.

I wolde live in pees, if that I might :  
 Wherfore I am disposed utterly,  
 As I his suster served er by night,  
 Right so thinke I to serve him prively.  
 This warne I you, that ye not sodenly  
 Out of yourself for no wo shuld outraie,  
 Beth patient, and therof I you praie. 8520

I have, quod she, sayd thus and ever shal,  
 I wol no thing, ne n'ill no thing certain,  
 But as you list : not greveth me at al,  
 Though that my doughter and my sone be slain  
 At your commandement : that is to sain,  
 I have not had no part of children twein,  
 But first sikenesse, and after wo and peine.

Ye ben my lord, doth with your owen thing  
 Right as you list, asketh no rede of me :

For

For as I left at home al my clothing  
Whan I came first to you, right so (quod she)  
Left I my will and al my libertee,  
And toke your clothing : wherfore I you prey,  
Doth your plesance, I wol youre lust obey.

And certes, if I hadde prescience  
Your will to know, er ye your lust me told,  
I wold it do withouten negligence :  
But now I wote your lust, and what ye wold,  
All your plesance ferme and stable I hold,  
For wist I that my deth might do you ese, 8540  
Right gladly wold I dien, you to please.

Deth may not maken no comparisoun  
Unto your love : and whan this markis say  
The constance of his wif, he cast adoun  
His eyen two, and wondreth how she may  
In patience suffer al this array :  
And forth he goth with dreery contenance,  
But to his herte it was ful gret plesance.

This ugly sergeant in the same wise  
That he hire doughter caughte, right so he 8550  
(Or werse, if men can any werse devise)  
Hath hent hire sone, that ful was of beautee :  
And ever in on so patient was she,

That



That she no chere made of hevynesse,  
But kist hire sone and after gan it blesse.

Save this she praied him, if that he might,  
Hire litel sone he wold in erthe grave,  
His tendre limmes, delicat to fight,  
Fro foules and fro bestes for to save.  
But she non answer of him mighte have, 8560  
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,  
But to Boloigne he tendrely it brought.

This markis wondreth ever lenger the more  
Upon hire patience, and if that he  
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbefore,  
That parfitly hire children loved she,  
He wold han wend that of som subtiltee  
And of malice, or for cruel corage,  
That she had suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew, that next himself, certain 8570  
She loved hire children best in every wise.  
But now of women wold I asken fayn,  
If thise assaies mighten not suffice;  
What coud a sturdy husbond more devise  
To preve hire wifhood, and hire stedfastnesse,  
And he continuing ever in sturdinesse?

But

But ther ben folk of swiche condition,  
That, whan they han a certain purpos take,  
They can not flint of hir entention,  
But, right as they were bounden to a stake, 8580  
They wol not of hir firste purpos flake :  
Right so this markis fully hath purposed  
To tempt his wif, as he was first disposed.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance  
That she to him was changed of corage :  
But never coud he finden variance,  
She was ay on in herte and in visage,  
And ay the further that she was in age,  
The more trewe (if that it were possible)  
She was to him in love, and more penible. 8590.

For which it semed thus, that of hem two  
Ther was but o will ; for as Walter left,  
The same lust was hire plesance also ;  
And God be thanked, all fell for the best.  
She shewed wel, for no worldly unrest  
A wif, as of hireself, no thing ne sholde  
Wille in effect, but as hire hufbond wolde.

The sclandre of Walter wonder wide spradde,  
That of a cruel herte he wikkedly,

For



For he a poure woman wedded hadde, 8600  
 Hath murdred both his children prively :  
 Swich murmur was among hem comunly.  
 No wonder is : for to the peples ere  
 Ther came no word, but that they murdred were.

For which ther as his peple therbefore  
 Had loved him wel, the sclandre of his diffame  
 Made hem that they him hateden therfore :  
 To ben a murdrour is an hateful name.  
 But natheles, for ernest ne for game,  
 He of his cruel purpos n'olde stente, 8610  
 To tempt his wif was sette all his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yere was of age,  
 He to the court of Rome, in subtil wise  
 Enformed of his will, sent his message,  
 Commanding him, swiche billes to devise,  
 As to his cruel purpos may suffise,  
 How that the pope, as for his peples rest  
 Bade him to wed another, if him left.

I say he bade, they shulden contrefete  
 The popes bulles, making mention 8620  
 That he hath leve his firste wif to lete,  
 As by the popes dispensation,  
 To stinten rancour and dissension

Betwix

Betwix his peple and him : thus spake the bull,  
The which they han published at the full.

The rude peple, as no wonder is,  
Wenden ful wel, that it had ben right so :  
But whan thise tidings came to Grifildis,  
I deme that hire herte was ful of wo ;  
But she ylike sad for evermo 8630  
Disposed was, this humble creature,  
The adversitee of fortune al to endure ;

Abiding ever his lust and his plesance,  
To whom that she was yeven, herte and al,  
As to hire veray worldly suffisance.  
But shortly if this storie tell I shal,  
This markis writen hath in special  
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,  
And secretyly he to Boloigne it sente,

To the erl of Pavie, which that hadde tho 8640  
Wedded his suster, prayed he specially  
To bringen home agein his children two  
In honourable estat al openly :  
But o thing he him prayed utterly,  
That he to no wight, though men wold enquire,  
Shulde not tell whos children that they were,



But say, the maiden shuld ywedded be  
 Unto the markis of Saluces anon.  
 And as this erl was prayed, so did he,  
 For at day sette he on his way is gon  
 Toward Saluces, and lordes many on  
 In rich arraie, this maiden for to gide,  
 Hire yonge brother riding hire beside.

8650

Arraied was toward hire mariage  
 This freshe maiden, ful of gemmes clere,  
 Hire brother, which that seven yere was of age,  
 Arraied eke ful fresh in his manere :  
 And thus in gret nobleffe and with glad chere  
 Toward Saluces shaping hir journey  
 Fro day to day they riden in hir way.

8660

*Pars quinta.*

Among al this, after his wicked usage,  
 This markis yet his wif to tempten more  
 To the uttereste prefe of hire corage,  
 Fully to have experience and lore,  
 If that she were as stedefast as before,  
 He on a day in open audience  
 Ful boistously hath said hire this sentence :

Certes, Grifilde, I had ynough plesance  
 To han you to my wif, for your goodnesse,

And

THE CLERKES' TALE. 35

And for your trouthe, and for your obeyfance, 8670  
 Not for your lineage, ne for your richeffe,  
 But now know I in veray fothfaftneffe,  
 That in gret lordship, if I me wel avife,  
 Ther is gret fervitude in fondry wife.

I may not don, as every ploughman may :  
 My peple me conftreineth for to take  
 Another wif, and crien day by day ;  
 And eke the pope rancour for to flake  
 Consenteth it, that dare I undertake :  
 And trewely, thus moche I wol you fay, 8680  
 My newe wif is coming by the way.

Be ftrong of herte, and voide anon hire place,  
 And thilke dower that ye broughten me  
 Take it agen, I grant it of my grace.  
 Returneth to your fadres hous, (quod he)  
 No man may alway have prosperitee.  
 With even herte I rede you to endure  
 The ftroke of fortune, or of aventure.

And she agen answerd in patience :  
 My lord, quod she, I wote, and wift alway, 8690  
 How that betwixen your magnificence  
 And my poverte no wight ne can ne may



Maken comparifon, it is no nay ;  
 I ne held me never digne in no manere  
 To be your wif, ne yet your chamberere.

And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,  
 (The highe God take I for my witneffe,  
 And all fo wifly he my foule glad)  
 I never held me lady ne maiftrefse,  
 But humble fervant to your worthineffe, 8700  
 And ever shal, while that my lif may dure,  
 Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye fo longe of your benignitee  
 Han holden me in honour and nobley,  
 Wheras I was not worthy for to be,  
 That thanke I God and you, to whom I prey  
 Foryelde it you, ther is no more to fey :  
 Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,  
 And with him dwell unto my lives ende ;

Ther I was foftred of a childe ful final, 8710  
 Til I be ded my lif ther wol I lede,  
 A widew clene in body, herte and al.  
 For fith I yave to you my maidenhede,  
 And am your trewe wif, it is no drede,  
 God shilde fwiche a lordes wif to take  
 Another man to hufbond or to make.

And

And of your newe wif, God of his grace  
 So graunte you wele and prosperite :  
 For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,  
 In which that I was blisful wont to be. 8720  
 For fith it liketh you, my lord, (quod she)  
 That whilom weren all myn hertes rest,  
 That I shal gon, I wol go whan you left.

But ther as ye me profre swiche dowaire  
 As I first brought, it is wel in my mind,  
 It were my wretched clothes, nothing faire,  
 The which to me were hard now for to find.  
 O goode God ! how gentil and how kind  
 Ye semed by your speche and your visage,  
 The day that maked was oure marriage ! 8730

But soth is said, algate I find it trewe,  
 For in effect it preved is on me,  
 Love is not old, as whan that it is newe.  
 But certes, lord, for non adversitee  
 To dien in this cas, it shal not be  
 That ever in word or werke I shal repent,  
 That I you yave min herte in hole entent.

My lord, ye wote, that in my fadres place  
 Ye dide me stripe out of my poure wede,



And richely ye clad me of your grace ; 8740  
 To you brought I nought elles out of drede,  
 But faith, and nakednesse, and maidenhede ;  
 And here agen your clothing I restore,  
 And eke your wedding ring for evermore,

The remenant of your jeweles redy be  
 Within your chambre, I dare it safely fain :  
 Naked out of my fadres hous (quod she)  
 I came, and naked I mote turne again.  
 All your plesance wolde I folwe fain :  
 But yet I hope it be not your entent, 8750  
 That I smokles out of your paleis went,

Ye coude not do so dishonest a thing,  
 That thilke wombe, in which your children lay,  
 Shulde before the peple, in my walking,  
 Be seen al bare : wherfore I you pray  
 Let me not like a worne go by the way :  
 Remembre you, min owen lord so dere,  
 I was your wif, though I unworthy were.

Wherfore in guerdon of my maidenhede,  
 Which that I brought and not agen I bere, 8760  
 As vouchesauf to yeve me to my mede  
 But swiche a smok as I was wont to were,  
 That I therwith may wrie the wombe of hire  
 That

That was your wif: and here I take my leve  
Of you, min owen lord, lest I you greve.

The smok, quod he, that thou hast on thy bake,  
Let it be still, and bere it forth with thee.  
But wel unnethes thilke word he spake,  
But went his way for routhe and for pitee.  
Before the folk hireselven stripeth she, 8770  
And in hire smok, with foot and hed al bare,  
Toward hire fadres hous forth is she fare.

The folk hire folwen weping in hir wey,  
And fortune ay they cursen as they gon:  
But she fro weping kept hire eyen drey,  
Ne in this time word ne spake she non.  
Hire fader, that this tiding herd anon,  
Curseth the day and time, that nature  
Shope him to ben a lives creature,

For out of doute this olde poure man 8780  
Was ever in suspect of hire mariage:  
For ever he demed, sin it first began,  
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corage,  
Him wolde thinke it were a disparage  
To his estat, so lowe for to alight,  
And voiden hire as sone as ever he might.



Agein his doughter hastily goth he,  
 (For he by noise of folk knew hire coming)  
 And with hire olde cote, as it might be,  
 He covereth hire ful forwefully weping :  
 But on hire body might he it not bring,  
 For rude was the cloth, and more of age  
 By daies fele than at hire mariage.

8790

Thus with hire fader for a certain space  
 Dwelleth this flour of wifly patience,  
 That nother by hire wordes ne hire face,  
 Beforn the folk, ne eke in hir absence,  
 Ne shewed she that hire was don offence,  
 Ne of hire high estat no remembrance  
 Ne hadde she, as by hire contenance,

8800

No wonder is, for in hire gret estat  
 Hire goft was ever in pleine humilitee ;  
 No tendre mouth, no herte delicat,  
 No pompe, no semblant of realtee ;  
 But ful of patient benignitee,  
 Discrete, and prideles, ay honourable,  
 And to hire husbond ever meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and most for his humbleffe,  
 As clerkes, whan hem list, can wel endite,

Namely

THE CLERKES TALE. 41

Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse, 8810  
 Though clerkes preisen women but a lite,  
 Ther can no man in humbleesse him acquite  
 As woman can, ne can be half so trewe  
 As women ben, but it be falle of newe.

*Pars sexta.*

Fro Boloigne is this erl of Pavie come,  
 Of which the fame up sprang to more and lesse :  
 And to the peples eres all and some  
 Was couth eke, that a newe markisesse  
 He with him brought, in swiche pomp and richesse,  
 That never was ther seen with mannes eye 8820  
 So noble array in al West Lombardie.

The markis, which that shope and knew all this,  
 Er that this erl was come, sent his message  
 For thilke poure fely Grifildis,  
 And she with humble herte and glad visage,  
 Not with no swollen thought in hire corage,  
 Came at his heft, and on hire knees hire sette,  
 And reverently and wisely she him grette.

Grifilde, (quod he) my will is utterly,  
 This maiden, that shal wedded be to me, 8830  
 Received be to-morwe as really

As



42 THE CLERKES TALE.

As it possible is in myn hous to be :  
 And eke that every wight in his degree  
 Have his estat in fitting and service,  
 And high plesance, as I can best devise.

I have no woman suffisant certain  
 The chambres for to array in ordinance  
 After my lust, and therfore wolde I fain,  
 That thin were all swiche manere governance :  
 Thou knowest eke of old all my plesance ; 8840  
 Though thin array he bad, and evil besey,  
 Do thou thy devoir at the leste wey.

Not only, lord, that I am glad (quod she)  
 To don your lust, but I desire also  
 You for to serve and plese in my degree,  
 Withouten fainting, and shal evermo :  
 Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,  
 Ne shal the gost within myn herte stente  
 To love you best with all my trewe entente.

And with that word she gan the hous to dight,  
 And tables for to sette, and beddes make, 8851  
 And peined her to don all that she might,  
 Praying the chambereres for Goddes sake  
 To hasten hem, and faste swepe and shake,

And

And she the moste serviceable of all  
Hath every chambre arraied, and his hall.

Abouten undern gan this erl alight,  
That with him brought thise noble children twey :  
For which the peple ran to see the fight  
Of hir array, so richely besey : 8860  
And than at erst amonges hem they sey,  
That Walter was no fool, though that him left  
To change his wif ; for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as they demen all,  
Than is Grifilde, and more tendre of age,  
And fairer fruit betwene hem shulde fall,  
And more plesant for hire high linage :  
Hire brother eke so faire was of visage,  
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesance,  
Commending now the markis governance. 8870

O stormy peple, unsad and ever untrewe,  
And undiscrete, and changing as a fane,  
Delighting ever in rombel that is newe,  
For like the mone waxen ye and wane :  
Ay ful of clapping, dere ynough a jane,  
Your dome is fals, your constance evil preveth,  
A ful gret fool is he that on you leveth.

Thus



Thus saiden fadde folk in that citee,  
Whan that the peple gased up and doun :  
For they were glad, right for the noveltee, 8880  
To have a newe lady of hir toun.  
No more of this make I now mentioun,  
But to Grifilde agen I wol me dresse,  
And telle hire constance, and hire besynesse.

Ful besy was Grifilde in every thing,  
That to the feste was appertinent ;  
Right naught was she abaist of hire clothing,  
Though it were rude, and somdel eke to-rent,  
But with glad chere to the yate is went  
With other folk, to grete the markisefse, 8890  
And after that doth forth hire besynesse.

With so glad chere his gestes she receiveth,  
And conningly everich in his degree,  
That no defaute no man apperceiveth,  
But ay they wondren what she mighte be,  
That in so poure array was for to see,  
And coude swiche honour and reverence,  
And worthily they preisen hire prudence.

In all this mene while she ne stent  
This maide and eke hire brother to commend 8900  
With

With all hire herte in ful benigne entent,  
 So wel, that no man coud hire preise amend :  
 But at the last whan that thise lordes wend  
 To fitten doun to mete, he gan to call  
 Grifilde, as she was besy in the hall.

Grifilde, (quod he, as it were in his play)  
 How liketh thee my wif, and hire beautee ?  
 Right wel, my lord, quod she, for in good fay,  
 A fairer saw I never non than she :  
 I pray to God yeve you prosperitee ; 8910  
 And so I hope, that he wol to you fend  
 Plefance ynough unto your lives end.

O thing besече I you and warne also,  
 That ye ne prikke with no turmenting  
 This tendre maiden, as ye han do mo :  
 For she is fostred in hire norishing  
 More tendrely, and to my supposyng  
 She mighte not adversitee endure,  
 As coude a poure fostred creature.

And whan this Walter saw hire patience, 8920  
 Hire glade chere, and no malice at all,  
 And he so often hadde hire don offence,  
 And she ay fadde and constant as a wall,  
 Continuing ever hire innocence over all,

This



This sturdy markis gan his herte dresse  
To rewe upon hire wifly stedefastnesse.

This is ynough, Grifilde min, quod he,  
Be now no more agast, ne evil apaid,  
I have thy faith and thy benignitee,  
As wel as ever woman was, assaid  
In gret estat, and pourelich arraid :  
Now know I, dere wif, thy stedefastnesse,  
And hire in armes toke, and gan to kesse.

8930

And she for wonder toke of it no kepe ;  
She herde not what thing he to hire said :  
She ferde as she had stert out of a slepe,  
Til she out of hire masednesse abraid.  
Grifilde, quod he, by God that for us deid,  
Thou art my wif, non other I ne have,  
Ne never had, as God my soule save.

8940

This is thy doughter, which thou hast supposed  
To be my wif ; that other faithfully  
Shal be min heir, as I have ay disposed ;  
Thou bare hem of thy body trewely :  
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively :  
Take hem agen, for now maist thou not say,  
That thou hast lorn non of thy children tway.

And

And folk, that otherwife han faid of me,  
I warne hem wel, that I have don this dede  
For no malice, ne for no crueltee, 8950  
But for to affay in thee thy womanhede :  
And not to flee my children (God forbede)  
But for to kepe hem prively and still,  
Til I thy purpos knew, and all thy will.

Whan ſhe this herd aſwounne doun ſhe falleth  
For pitous joye, and after hire ſwouning  
She both hire yonge children to hire calleth,  
And in hire armes pitouſly weping  
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kiſſing  
Ful like a moder with hire ſalte teres 8960  
She bathed both hir viſage and hir heres.

O, which a pitous thing it was to ſee  
Hire ſwouning, and hire humble vois to here !  
*Grand mercy*, lord, God thank it you (quod ſhe)  
That ye han ſaved me my children dere :  
Now rekke I never to be ded right here,  
Sin I ſtond in your love, and in your grace,  
No force of deth, ne whan my ſpirit pace.

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children mine,  
Your woful mother wened ſtedfaſtly, 8970  
That



That cruel houndes, or som foul vermine  
 Had eten you ; but God of his mercy,  
 And your benigne fader tendrely  
 Hath don you kepe : and in that same stound  
 Al sodenly she swapt adoun to ground.

And in hire swough so sadly holdeth she  
 Hire children two, whan she gan hem embrace,  
 That with gret sleight and gret difficultee  
 The children from hire arm they gan arrace :  
 O ! many a tere on many a pitous face 8980  
 Doun ran of hem that stoden hire beside,  
 Unnethe abouten hire might they abide.

Walter hire gladeth, and hire sorwe flaketh,  
 She riseth up abashed from hire trance,  
 And every wight hire joye and feste maketh,  
 Til she hath caught agen hire contenance.  
 Walter hire doth so faithfully plesance,  
 That it was deintee for to seen the chere  
 Betwix hem two, sin they ben met in fere.

Thise ladies, whan that they hir time fey, 8990  
 Han taken hire, and into chambre gon,  
 And stripen hire out of hire rude arrey,  
 And in a cloth of gold that brighte shone,  
 With a coroune of many a riche stone

Upon

Upon hire hed, they into hall hire broughte :  
And ther she was honoured as hire ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful end ;  
For every man, and woman, doth his might  
This day in mirth and revel to dispend,  
Til on the welkin shone the sterres bright : 9000  
For more solempne in every mannes fight  
This feste was, and greter of costage,  
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yere in high prosperitee  
Liven thise two in concord and in rest,  
And richely his doughter married he  
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest  
Of all Itaille, and than in pees and rest  
His wives fader in his court he kepeth,  
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth. 9010

His sone succedeth in his heritage,  
In rest and pees, after his fadres day :  
And fortunat was eke in mariage,  
Al put he not his wif in gret assay :  
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,  
As it hath ben in olde times yore,  
And herkneþ, what this auctour saith thetore.



50 THE CLERKES TALE.

This story is said, not for that wives shuld  
 Folwe Grifilde, as in humilitee,  
 For it were importable, tho they wold ; 9020  
 But for that every wight in his degree  
 Shulde be constant in adversitee,  
 As was Grifilde, therefore Petrark writeth  
 This storie, which with high stile he enditeth.

For fith a woman was so patient  
 Unto a mortal man, wel more we ought  
 Receiven all in gree that God us sent.  
 For gret skill is he preve that he wrought :  
 But he ne tempteth no man that he bought,  
 As faith seint Jame, if ye his pistell rede ; 9030  
 He preveth folk al day, it is no drede.

And suffreth us, as for our exercise,  
 With sharpe scourges of adversitee,  
 Ful often to be bete in sondry wise ;  
 Not for to know our will, for certes he  
 Or we were borne, knew all our freeletee ;  
 And for our best is all his governance ;  
 Let us than live in vertuous suffrance.

But o word, lordings, herkeneth, or I go :  
 It were ful hard to finden now adayes 9040  
 In

In all a toun Grifildes three or two :  
For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
The gold of hem hath now so bad alayes  
With bras, that though the coine be faire at eye,  
It wolde rather braft atwo than plie.

For which here, for the wives love of Bathe,  
Whos lif and al hire secte God maintene  
In high maistrie, and elles were it scathe,  
I wol with lusty herte freshe and grene,  
Say you a song to gladen you, I wene : 9050  
And let us stint of earnestful matere.  
Herkneth my song, that faith in this manere.

Grifilde is ded, and eke hire patience,  
And both at ones buried in Itaille :  
For which I crie in open audience,  
No wedded man so hardy be to assaille  
His wives patience, in trust to find  
Grifildes, for in certain he shal faille.

O noble wives, ful of high prudence,  
Let non humilitee your tonges naile : 9060  
Ne let no clerk have cause or diligence  
To write of you a storie of swiche mervaille,  
As of Grifildis patient and kinde,  
Lest Chichevache you swalwe in hire entraille.



Folweth ecco, that holdeth no silence,  
 But ever answereth at the countretaille :  
 Beth not bedaffed for your innocence,  
 But sharply taketh on you the governaille :  
 Emprinteth wel this lesson in your minde,  
 For comun profit, fith it may availle.

9070

Ye archewives, stondeth ay at defence,  
 Sin ye be strong, as is a gret carnaille,  
 Ne suffreth not, that men do you offence.  
 And sclendre wives, feble as in bataille,  
 Beth egre as is a tigre yond in Inde ;  
 Ay clappeth as a mill, I you counsaillle.

Ne drede hem not, doth hem no reverence,  
 For though thin husbond armed be in maille,  
 The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence  
 Shal perce his brest, and eke his aventaille : 9080  
 In jalousie I rede eke thou him binde,  
 And thou shalt make him couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be faire, ther folk ben in presence  
 Shew thou thy visage, and thin apparaille :  
 If thou be foule, be free of thy dispence,  
 To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille :  
 Be ay of chere as light as lese on linde,  
 And let him care, and wepe, and wringe, and waille.

THE

THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE. 53

THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

WEPING and wailing, care and other sorwe  
I have ynough, on even and on morwe, 9090  
Quod the marchant, and so have other mo,  
That wedded ben; I trowe that it be so:  
For wel I wot it fareth so by me.  
I have a wif, the werste that may be,  
For though the fend to hire ycoupled were,  
She wolde him overmatche I dare wel swere.  
What shulde I you reherse in special  
Hire high malice? she is a shrew at al.

Ther is a long and a large difference  
Betwix Grisildes grete patience, 9100  
And of my wife the passing crueltee,  
Were I unbounden, all so mote I the,  
I wolde never eft comen in the snare.  
We wedded men live in sorwe and care,  
Assay it who so wol, and he shal finde  
That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,  
As for the more part, I say not alle;  
God shilde that it shulde so befall.

A good fire hoste, I have ywedded be  
Thise monethes two, and more not parde; 9110  
And yet I trowe that he, that all his lif  
Wifles hath ben, though that men wolde him rise



#### 54 THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

Into the herte, ne coude in no manere  
Tellen so much forwe, as I you here  
Coud tellen of my wives cursednesse.

Now, quod our hoste, marchant, so God you bleffe,  
Sin ye so mochel knowen of that art,  
Ful hertely I pray you tell us part.

Gladly, quod he, but of min owen fore  
For sory herte I tellen may no more. 9129

#### THE MARCHANTES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwelling in Lumbardie  
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,  
In which he lived in gret prosperitee;  
And sixty yere a wifes man was he,  
And solwed ay his bodily delit  
On women, ther as was his appetit,  
As don thise fooles that ben seculere.  
And whan that he was passed sixty yere,  
Were it for holinesse or for dotage,  
I cannot sain, but swiche a gret corage 9130  
Hadde this knight to ben a wedded man,  
That day and night he doth all that he can  
To espie, wher that he might wedded be;  
Praying our lord to granten him, that he  
Mighte ones knowen of that blisful lif,  
That is betwix an husbond and his wif,

And

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 55

And for to live under that holy bond,  
 With which God firſte man and woman bond.  
 Non other lif (ſaid he) is worth a bene :  
 For wedlok is ſo eſy and ſo clene, 9140  
 That in this world it is a paradise.

Thus faith this olde knight, that was ſo wiſe.

And certainly, as ſoth as God is king,  
 To take a wif, it is a glorious thing,  
 And namely whan a man is old and hore,  
 Than is a wif the fruit of his treſore ;  
 Than ſhuld he take a yong wif and a faire,  
 On which he might engendren him an heire,  
 And lede his lif in joye and in ſolas,

Wheras thiſe bachelers ſingen alas, 9150  
 Whan that they finde any adverſitee

In love, which n'is but childiſh vanitee,  
 And trewely it fit wel to be ſo,  
 That bachelers have often peine and wo :  
 On brotel ground they bilde, and brotelneſſe  
 They finden, whan they wenen ſikerneſſe :  
 They live but as a bird or as a beſte,

In libertee and under non areſte,  
 Ther as a wedded man in his eſtat  
 Liveth a lif bliſful and ordinat, 9160  
 Under the yoke of mariage ybound :  
 Wel may his herte in joye and bliſſe abound.



56 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For who can be so buxom as a wif?  
 Who is so trewe and eke so ententif  
 To kepe him, fike and hole, as is his make?  
 For wele or wo she n'ill him not forsake:  
 She n'is not wery him to love and serve,  
 Though that he lie bedrede til that he sterve.

And yet som clerkes fain, it is not so,  
 Of which he Theophrast is on of tho: 9170  
 What force though Theophrast list for to lie?

Ne take no wif, quod he, for husbondrie,  
 As for to spare in houshold thy dispenche:  
 A trewe servant doth more diligence  
 Thy good to kepe, than doth thin owen wif,  
 For she wol claimen half part al hire lif.  
 And if that thou be fike, so God me save,  
 Thy veray frendes or a trewe knave  
 Wol kepe thee bet than she, that waiteth ay  
 After thy good, and hath don many a day. 9180

This sentence, and an hundred thinges werse  
 Writeth this man ther God his bones curse.  
 But take no kepe of al swiche vanitee,  
 Desieth Theophrast, and herkeneth me.

A wif is Goddes yeste veraily;  
 All other maner yestes hardely,  
 As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,  
 Or mebles, all ben yestes of fortune,

That

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 57

That passen as a shadow on the wall :  
 But drede thou not, if plainly speke I shal, 9190.  
 A wif wol last and in thin hous endure,  
 Wel lenger than thee list paraventure.

Mariage is a ful gret sacrament ;  
 He which that hath no wif I hold him shent ;  
 He liveth helples, and all desolat :  
 (I speke of folk in seculer estat)  
 And herkneþ why, I say not this for nought,  
 That woman is for mannes helpe ywrought.  
 The highe God, whan he had Adam maked,  
 And saw him al alone belly naked, 9200  
 God of his grete goodnesse saide than,  
 Let us now make an helpe unto this man  
 Like to himself, and than he made him Eve.

Here may ye see, and hereby may ye preve,  
 That a wif is mannes helpe and his comfort,  
 His paradis terrestre and his disport :  
 So buxom and so vertuous is she,  
 They mosten nedes live in unitee :  
 O flesh they ben, and o flesh, as I gesse,  
 Hath but on herte in wele and in distresse. 9210

A wif? a! seinte Marie, *benedicite*,  
 How might a man have any adversite  
 That hath a wif? certes I cannot seye.  
 The blisse the which that is betwix hem tweye  
 Ther



38 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.  
 If he be poure, she helpeth him to swinke;  
 She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a del;  
 All that hire husband doth, hire liketh wel;  
 She saith not ones nay, whan he saith ye;  
 Do this, saith he; al redy, fire, saith she. 9220

O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious,  
 Thou art so mery, and eke so vertuous,  
 And so commended, and approved eke,  
 That every man that holt him worth a leke,  
 Upon his bare knees ought all his lif  
 Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,  
 Or elles pray to God him for to send  
 A wif, to last unto his lives end.  
 For than his lif is set in sikernesse,  
 He may not be deceived, as I gesse, 9230  
 So that he werche after his wives rede;  
 Than may he boldly beren up his hede,  
 They ben so trewe, and therwithal so wise.  
 For which, if thou wilt werchen as the wise,  
 Do alway so, as women wol thee rede.

Lo how that Jacob, as thise clerkes rede,  
 By good conseil of his mother Rebekke  
 Bounde the kiddes skin about his nekke;  
 For which his fadres benison he wan.

Lo Judith, as the storie eke tell can, 9240  
 By

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 59

By good conseil she Goddes peple kept,  
And flow him Holofernes while he slept.

Lo Abigail, by good conseil how she  
Saved hire husbond Nabal, whan that he  
Shuld han be slain. And loke, Hester also  
By good conseil delivered out of wo  
The peple of God, and made him Mardochee  
Of Assuere enhauned for to be.

Ther n'is no thing in gree superlatif  
(As faith Senek) above an humble wif. 9250  
Suffer thy wives tonge, as Caton bit,  
She shal command, and thou shalt suffren it,  
And yet she wol obey of curtesie.

A wif is keper of thin husbondrie :  
Wel may the fike man bewaile and wepe,  
Ther as ther is no wif the hous to kepe.  
I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt werche,  
Love wel thy wif, as Crist loveth his cherche :  
If thou lovest thyself, love thou thy wif.  
No man hateth his flesh, but in his lif 9260  
He fostreth it, and therefore bid I thee  
Cherish thy wif, or thou shalt never the.  
Husbond and wif, what so men jape or play,  
Of worldly folk holden the fiker way :  
They ben so knit, ther may non harm betide,  
And namely upon the wives side.

For



60 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For which this January, of whom I told,  
 Considered hath within his dayes old  
 The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,  
 That is in mariage hony-swete. 9270

And for his frendes on a day he sent  
 To tellen hem th' effect of his entent.

With face sad, his tale he hath hem told :  
 He sayde, frendes, I am hore and old,  
 And almost (God wot) on my pittes brinke,  
 Upon my soule somewhat most I thinke.  
 I have my body folily dispended,  
 Blessed be God that it shal ben amended :  
 For I wol ben certain a wedded man,  
 And that anon in all the hast I can. 9280  
 Unto som maiden, faire and tendre of age,  
 I pray you shapeth for my mariage  
 All sodenly, for I wol not abide :  
 And I wol fonde to espie on my side,  
 To whom I may be wedded hastily.  
 But for as moche as ye ben more than I,  
 Ye shullen rather swiche a thing espie  
 Than I, and wher me beste were to allien.

But o thing warn I you, my frendes dere,  
 I wol non old wif han in no manere : 9290  
 She shal not passen twenty yere certain.  
 Old fish and yonge flesh wold I have fain.

Bet

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 61

Bet is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,  
And bet than old beef is the tendre veel.  
I wol no woman thirty yere of age,  
It is but benestraw and gret forage.  
And eke thise olde widewes (God it wote)  
They connen so moch craft on Wades bote,  
So mochel broken harm whan that hem left,  
That with hem shuld I never live in rest. 9300  
For fondry scoles maken subtil clerkes;  
Woman of many scoles half a clerk is.  
But certainly, a yong thing men may gie,  
Right as men may warm wax with handes plie.  
Wherfore I say you plainly in a clause,  
I wol non old wif han right for this cause.  
For if so were I hadde swiche meschance,  
That I in hire ne coude have no plesance,  
Than shuld I lede my lif in avourie,  
And so streight to the devil whan I die. 9310  
Ne children shuld I non upon hire geten:  
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,  
Than that min heritage shulde fall  
In straunge hondes: and this I tell you all.  
I dote not, I wot the cause why  
Men shulden wedde: and furthermore wot I,  
Ther speketh many a man of mariage,  
That wot no more of it than wot my page,

For



62 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For which causes a man shuld take a wif.  
 If he ne may not liven chaste his lif, 9320  
 Take him a wif with gret devotion,  
 Because of leful procreation  
 Of children, to the honour of God above,  
 And not only for paramour or love;  
 And for they shulden lecherie eschue,  
 And yeld hir dette whan that it is due:  
 Or for that eche of hem shuld helpen other  
 In meschefe, as a suster shal the brother,  
 And live in chastitee ful holily.

But, fires, (by your leve) that am not I, 9330  
 For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,  
 I fele my limmes stark and sufficient  
 To don all that a man belongeth to:  
 I wot myselven best what I may do.  
 Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tre,  
 That blosmeth er the fruit ywoxen be;  
 The blosmy tre n'is neither drie ne ded:  
 I fele me no wher hoor but on my hed.  
 Min herte and all my limmes ben as grene,  
 As laurer thurgh the yere is for to sene. 9340  
 And sin that ye han herd all min entent,  
 I pray you to my will ye wolde assent.

Diverse men diversely him told  
 Of mariage many ensamples old;

Som

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 63

Som blamed it, som praised it certain ;  
 But atte laste, shortly for to fain,  
 (As all day falleth altercation,  
 Betwixen frendes in disputifon)  
 Ther fell a strif betwix his brethren two,  
 Of which that on was cleped Placebo, 9350  
 Justinus sothly called was that other.

Placebo sayd ; O January brother,  
 Ful litel nede han ye, my lord so dere,  
 Confeil to aske of any that is here :  
 But that ye ben so ful of sapience,  
 That you ne liketh for your high prudence,  
 To weiven fro the word of Salomon.  
 This word sayd he unto us everich on ;  
 Werke alle thing by confeil, thus sayd he,  
 And than ne shalt thou not repenten thee. 9360  
 But though that Salomon spake swiche a word,  
 Min owen dere brother and my lord,  
 So wisly God my soule bringe at rest,  
 I hold your owen confeil is the best.

For, brother min, take of me this motif,  
 I have now ben a court-man all my lif,  
 And God it wot, though I unworthy be,  
 I have stonden in ful gret degree  
 Abouten lordes of ful high estat :  
 Yet had I never with non of hem debat, 9370  
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64 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

I never hem contraried trewely.  
 I wot wel that my lord can more than I;  
 What that he saith, I hold it firme and stable,  
 I say the same, or elles thing semblable.  
 A ful gret fool is any conseillour,  
 That serveth any lord of high honour,  
 That dare presume, or ones thinken it,  
 That his conseil shuld passe his lordes wit.  
 Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.  
 Ye han yourselven shewed here to-day 9380  
 So high sentence, so holily, and wel,  
 That I consent, and confirms every del  
 Your wordes all, and your opinioun.  
 By God ther n'is no man iz all this toun  
 Ne in Itaille, coud bet han ysayd:  
 Crist holt him of this conseil wel appaid.  
 And trewely it is an high corage  
 Of any man that stopen is in age,  
 To take a young wif, by my fader kin:  
 Your herte hongeth on a joly pin. 9390  
 Doth now in this matere right as you lest,  
 For finally, I hold it for the best.  
 Justinus, that ay stille fat and herd,  
 Right in this wise he to Placebo answerd.  
 Now, brother min, be patient I pray,  
 Sin ye han said, and herkneth what I say.

Senek

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 65

Senek among his other wordes wise  
 Saith, that a man ought him right wel avise,  
 To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.  
 And sith I ought avisen me right wel, 9400  
 To whom I yeve my good away fro me,  
 Wel more I ought avisen me, parde,  
 To whom I yeve my body : for alway  
 I warne you wel it is no childes play  
 To take a wif without avisement.  
 Men must enqueren (this is min assent)  
 Wheder she be wise and sobre, or dronkelewe,  
 Or proud, or elles other waies a shrew,  
 A chidester, or a waster of thy good, *wastour*  
 Or riche or poure, or elles a man is wood. 9410  
 Al be it so, that no man finden shal  
 Non in this world, that trotteth hol in al,  
 Ne man, ne beste, swiche as men can devise,  
 But natheles it ought ynough suffice  
 With any wif, if so were that she had  
 Mo goode thewes, than hire vices bad :  
 And all this axeth leiser to enquere.  
 For God it wot, I have wept many a tere  
 Ful prively, sin that I had a wif.  
 Praise who so wol a wedded mannes lif, 9420  
 Certain I find in it but cost and care,  
 And observances of alle blisses bare.



66 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

And yet, God wot, my neighebours aboute,  
And namely of women many a route,  
Sain that I have the moste stedefast wif,  
And eke the mekest on that bereth lif.  
But I wot best, wher wringeth me my sho.  
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.

Aviseþ you, ye ben a man of age,  
How that ye entren into mariage 9430  
And namely with a yong wif and a faire.  
By him that made water, fire, erthe, and aire  
The yongest man, that is in all this route,  
Is besy ynow to bringen it aboute  
To han his wif alone, trusteth me :  
Ye shul not plesen hire fully yeres three,  
This is to sain, to don hire ful plesance.  
A wif axeth ful many an observance.  
I pray you that ye be not evil appaid.

Wel, quod this January, and hast thou saide ? 9440  
Straw for Senek, and straw for thy proverbes,  
I counte not a panier ful of herbes  
Of scole termes ; wiser men than thou,  
As thou hast herd, assented here right now  
To my purpos : Placebo, what saye ye ?

I say it is a cursed man, quod he,  
That letteth matrimoine fikerly.  
And with that word they risen sodenly,

And

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 67

And ben assented fully, that he sholde  
Be wedded whan him list, and wher he wolde. 9450

High fantasie and curious besynesse  
Fro day to day gan in the foule empreffe  
Of January about his mariage.

Many a faire shap, and many a faire visage  
Ther passeth thurgh his herte night by night  
As who so toke a mirrour polished bright,

And set it in a comune market place,  
Than shuld he see many a figure pace  
By his mirrour, and in the same wise  
Gan January in with his thought devise 9460  
Of maidens, which that dwelten him beside :

He wiste not wher that he might abide.  
For if that on have beautee in hire face,  
Another stont so in the peples grace  
For hire sadnesse and hire benignitee,  
That of the peple the gretest vois hath she :  
And som were riche and hadden a bad name.

But natheles, betwix ernest and game,  
He at the last appointed him on on,  
And let all other from his herte gon, 9470  
And chees hire of his owen auctoritee,  
For love is blind all day, and may not see.  
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,  
He purtreied in his herte and in his thought



68 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Hire freshe beautee, and hire age tendre,  
 Hire middel smal, hire armes long and sclendre,  
 Hire wise governance, hire gentilleffe,  
 Hire womanly bering, and hire sadnesse.

And whan that he on hire was condescended,  
 Him thought his chois it might not ben amended;  
 For whan that he himself concluded had, 9481  
 Him thought eche other mannes wit so bad,  
 That impossible it were to replie  
 Again his chois; this was his fantasie.

His frendes sent he to, at his instance,  
 And praied hem to don him that plesance,  
 That hastily they wolden to him come;  
 He wolde abregge hir labour all and some:  
 Neded no more to hem to go ne ride,  
 He was appointed ther he wolde abide. 9490

Placebo came, and eke his frendes sone,  
 And alderfirst he bade hem all a bone,  
 That non of hem non argumentes make  
 Again the purpos that he hath ytake:  
 Which purpos was plesant to God (said he)  
 And veray ground of his prosperitee.

He said, ther was a maiden in the toun,  
 Which that of beautee hadde gret renoun,  
 Al were it so, she were of smal degree,  
 Sufficeth him hire youth and hire beautee: 9500  
 Which

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 69

Which maid (he said) he wold han to his wif  
 To lede in ese and holinesse his life :  
 And thanked God, that he might han hire all,  
 That no wight with his blisse parten shall :  
 And praied hem to labour in this nede,  
 And shapen that he faille not to spede.  
 For than, he sayd, his spirit was at ese ;  
 Than is (quod he) nothing may me displese,  
 Save o thing pricketh in my conscience,  
 The which I wol reherse in your presence. 9510

I have (quod he) herd said ful yore ago,  
 Ther may no man han parfite blisses two,  
 This is to say, in erthe and eke in heven.  
 For though he kepe him fro the finnes seven,  
 And eke from every branch of thilke tree,  
 Yet is ther so parfit felicitee,  
 And so gret ese and lust in mariage,  
 That ever I am agast now in min age,  
 That I shal leden now so mery a lif,  
 So delicat, withouten wo or strif, 9520  
 That I shal han min heven in erthe here.  
 For fin that veray heven is bought so dere  
 With tribulation and gret penance,  
 How shuld I than, living in swiche plesance  
 As alle wedded men don with hir wives,  
 Come to the blisse, ther Crist eterne on live is ?



70 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

This is my drede, and ye, my brethren tweie,  
Affoileth me this question I preie.

Justinus, which that hated his folie,  
Answerd anon right in his japerie; 9530  
And for he wold his longe tale abrege,  
He wolde non auctoritee allege,  
But sayde, sire, so ther be non obstacle  
Other than this, God of his hie miracle,  
And of his mercy may so for you werche,  
That er ye have your rights of holy cherche,  
Ye may repent of wedded mannes lif,  
In which ye sain ther is no wo ne strif:  
And elles God forbede, but if he sent  
A wedded man his grace him to repent 9540  
Wel often, rather than a single man.  
And therefore, sire, the best rede that I can,  
Despeire you not, but haveth in memorie,  
Paraventure she may be your purgatorie;  
She may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;  
Than shal your soule up unto heaven skippe  
Swifter than doth an arow of a bow.  
I hope to God hereafter ye shal know,  
That ther n'is non so gret felicitee  
In mariage, ne never more shal be, 9550  
That you shal let of your salvation,  
So that ye use, as skill is and reson,

The

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 71

The lustes of your wif attemprely,  
 And that ye plese hire nat to amorously :  
 And that ye kepe you eke from other sinne.  
 My tale is don, for my wit is but thinne.  
 Beth not agast hereof, my brother dere,  
 But let us waden out of this matere.  
 The wif of Bathe, if ye han understond,  
 Of mariage, which ye now han in hond, 9560  
 Declared hath ful wel in litel space ;  
 Fareth now wel, God have you in his grace.

And with this word this Justine and his brother  
 Han take hir leve, and eche of hem of other.  
 And whan they saw that it must nedes be,  
 They wroughten so by sleighte and wise tretee,  
 That she this maiden, which that Maius hight,  
 As hastily as ever that she might,  
 Shal wedded be unto this January.  
 I trow it were to longe you to tary, 9570  
 If I you told of every script and bond,  
 By which that she was feoffed in his lond ;  
 Or for to rekken of hire rich array.  
 But finally ycomen is the day,  
 That to the chirche bothe ben they went,  
 For to receive the holy sacrament.  
 Forth cometh the preest, with stole about his nekke,  
 And bade hire be like Sara and Rebekke,



72 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

In wifdome and in trouthe of mariage :  
 And fayd his orifons, as is ufage, 9580  
 And crouched hem, and bade God fhuld hem bleffe,  
 And made all fiker ynow with holineffe.

Thus ben they wedded with folempnitee ;  
 And at the feſte fitteth he and ſhe  
 With other worthy folk upon the deis;  
 Al ful of joye and bliſſe is the paleis,  
 And ful of instruments, and of vitaille,  
 The moſte deinteous of all Itaille.  
 Beforn hem ſtood ſwiche instruments of foun,  
 That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion, 9590  
 Ne maden never ſwiche a melodie.  
 At every cours in came loude minſtralcie,  
 That never Joab tromped for to here,  
 Ne he Theodomas yet half ſo clere  
 At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.  
 Bacchus the win hem ſkinketh al aboute,  
 And Venus laugheth upon every wight,  
 (For January was become hire knight,  
 And wolde bothe aflaen his corage  
 In libertee, and eke in mariage) 9600  
 And with hire firebrond in hire hond aboute  
 Danceth before the bride and all the route.  
 And certainly I dare right wel ſay this,  
 Ymeneus, that God of wedding is,

Saw

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 73

Saw never his lif so mery a wedded man.

Hold thou thy pees, thou poet Marcian,  
That writest us that ilke wedding mery  
Of hire Philologie and him Mercurie,  
And of the songes that the Muses songe:  
To smal is both thy pen and eke thy tonge 9610  
For to descriven of this mariage.

Whan tendre youth hath wedded stouping age,  
Ther is swiche mirth that it may not be writen;  
Affaieth it yourself, than may ye witen  
If that I lie or non in this matere.

Maius, that sit with so benigne a chere,  
Hire to behold it femed faerie,  
Quene Hester loked never with swiche an eye  
On Affuere, so meke a look hath she,  
I may you not devise all hire beautee; 9620  
But thus moch of hire beautee tell I may,  
That she was like the brighte morwe of May  
Fulfilled of all beautee, and plesance.

This January is ravished in a trance,  
At every time he loketh in hire face,  
But in his herte he gan hire to manace,  
That he that night in armes wold hire streine  
Harder than ever Paris did Heleine.  
But natheles yet had he gret pitee  
That thilke night offenden hire must he, 9630  
And



74 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

And thought, alas, o tendre creature,  
 Now wolde God ye mighten wel endure  
 All my corage, it is so sharpe and kene;  
 I am agast ye shal it nat sustene.  
 But God forbede, that I did all my might.  
 Now wolde God that it were waxen night,  
 And that the night wold lasten ever mo.  
 I wold that all this peple were ago.  
 And finally he doth all his labour,  
 As he best mighte, saving his honour, 9649  
 To haste hem fro the mete in subtil wise.

The time came that reson was to rise,  
 And after that men dance, and drinken fast,  
 And spices all about the hous they cast,  
 And ful of joye and blisse is every man,  
 All but a squier, that highte Damian,  
 Which carf befor the knight ful many a day:  
 He was so ravisht on his lady May,  
 That for the veray peine he was nie wood;  
 Almost he swelt, and fwouned ther he stood: 9650  
 So fore hath Venus hurt him with hire brond,  
 As that she bare it dancing in hire hond.  
 And to his bed he went him hastily;  
 No more of him as at this time speke I;  
 But ther I let him wepe ynow and plaine,  
 Til freshe May wol rewen on his peine.

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 75

O perilous fire, that in the bedstrow bredeth !  
O famuler fo, that his service bedeth !  
O servant traitour, false of holy hewe,  
Like to the nedder in bosom flie untrewē, 9660  
God shelde us alle from your acquaintance!  
O January, drunken in plesance  
Of mariage, see how thy Damian,  
Thin owen squier and thy boren man,  
Entendeth for to do thee vilanie :  
God grante thee thin homly fo to espie.  
For in this world n'is werse pestilence,  
Than homly fo, all day in thy presence.

Parformed hath the sonne his arke diurne,  
No longer may the body of him sojourne 9670  
On the orisont, as in that latitude :  
Night with his mantel, that is derke and rude,  
Gan oversprede the Hemisperie aboute :  
For which departed is this lusty route  
Fro January, with thank on every side.  
Home to hir houses lustily they ride,  
Ther as they don hir thinges, as hem left,  
And whan they saw hir time gon to rest.

Sone after that this hastif January  
Wol go to bed, he wol no longer tary. 9680  
He drinketh Ipocras, clarre, and vernage  
Of spices hot, to encrefen his corage :

And



76 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

And many a letuarie had he ful fine,  
Swiche as the cursed monk dan Constantine  
Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;  
To ete hem all he wolde nothing eschue:  
And to his privee frendes thus sayd he:

For Goddes love, as fone as it may be,  
Let voiden all this hous in curteis wise.  
And they han don right as he wol devise. 9690

Men drinken, and the travers drawe anon;  
The bride is brought a-bed as still as ston;  
And whan the bed was with the preeft yblessed,  
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed,  
And January hath fast in armes take  
His freshe May, his paradis, his make.  
He lulleth hire, he kisseth hire ful oft;  
With thicke bristles of his berd unsoft,  
Like to the skin of houndfish, sharp as brere,  
(For he was shave al newe in his manere) 9700  
He rubbeth hire upon hire tendre face,  
And sayde thus; Alas! I mote trespace  
To you, my spouse, and you gretly offend,  
Or time come that I wol down descend.  
But natheles considereth this, (quod he)  
Ther n'is no werkman, whatsoever he be,  
That may both werken wel and hastily:  
This wol be don at leiser parfitly.

It

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 77

It is no force how longe that we play ;  
In trewe wedlok coupled be we tway ; 9710  
And blessed be the yoke that we ben inne,  
For in our actes may ther be no finne.

A man may do no finne with his wif,  
Ne hurt himselven with his owen knif :  
For we have leve to play us by the lawe.

Thus laboureth he, til that the day gan dawe,  
And than he taketh a sop in fine clarre,  
And upright in his bed than fitteth he.  
And after that he sang ful loud and clere,  
And kist his wif, and maketh wanton chere. 9720  
He was al coltish, ful of ragerie,  
And ful of jergon, as a flecked pie.

The slacke skin about his necke shaketh,  
While that he sang, so chanteth he and craketh.  
But God wot what that May thought in hire herte,  
Whan she him saw up sitting in his sherte  
In his night cap, and with his necke lene :  
She praiseth not his playing worth a bene.  
Than sayd he thus ; my reste wol I take  
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake ; 9730  
And down he layd his hed and slept til prime.  
And afterward, whan that he saw his time,  
Up riseth January, but freshe May  
Held hire in chambre til the fourthe day,

As



78 THE MARCHANTES TALE:

As usage is of wives for the beste.  
For every labour somtime moste han reste,  
Or elles longe may he not endure;  
This is to say, no lives creature,  
Be it of fish, or brid, or best, or man:

Now wol I speke of woful Damian,  
That langureth for love, as ye shul here;  
Therefore I speke to him in this manere.  
I say, O fely Damian, alas!

9748

Answer to this demand, as in this cas,  
How shalt thou to thy lady freshe May  
Tellen thy wo? She wol alway say nay;  
Eke if thou speke, she wol thy wo bewrein;  
God be thin help, I can no better sein.

This fike Damian in Venus fire  
So brenneth, that he dieth for desire;  
For which he put his lif in aventure,  
No lenger might he in this wise endure,  
But prively a penner gan he borwe,  
And in a lettre wrote he all his forwe,  
In manere of a complaint or a lay,  
Unto his faire freshe lady May.  
And in a purse of filk, heng on his sherte,  
He hath it put, and layd it at his herte.

9750

The mone that at none was thilke day  
That January hath wedded freshe May

9760

In

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 79

In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden ;  
 So long hath Maius in hire chambre abiden,  
 As custome is unto thise nobles alle.  
 A bride shal not eten in the halle,  
 Til dayes four or three dayes at the leste  
 Ypassed ben, than let hire go to feste.  
 The fourthe day complete fro none to none,  
 Whan that the highe messe was ydone,  
 In halle sat this January and May,  
 As fresh as is the brighte somers day. 9770  
 And so besel, how that this goode man  
 Remembred him upon this Damian,  
 And sayde ; Seinte Marie, how may it be,  
 That Damian entendeth not to me ?

Is he ay fike ? or how may this betide ?  
 His squiers, which that stoden ther beside,  
 Excused him, because of his siknesse,  
 Which letted him to don his besinesse :  
 Non other cause mighte make him tary.

That me forthinketh, quod this January ; 9780  
 He is a gentil squier by my trouthe,  
 If that he died, it were gret harme and routhe.  
 He is as wise, discret, and as secree,  
 As any man I wote of his degree,  
 And therto manly and eke servisable,  
 And for to ben a thrifty man right able.

But



80 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

But after mete as fone as ever I may  
 I wol myfelfe vifite him, and eke May,  
 To don him all the comfort that I can.  
 And for that word him blessed every man, 9790  
 That of his bountee and his gentilleffe  
 He wolde fo comforten in fikneffe  
 His squier, for it was a gentil dede.

Dame, quod this January, take good hede,  
 At after mete, ye with your women alle,  
 (Whan that ye ben in chambre out of this halle)  
 That all ye gon to see this Damian:  
 Doth him difport, he is a gentil man,  
 And telleth him that I wol him vifite,  
 Have I no thing but refted me a lite : 9800  
 And fpede you fafte, for I wol abide  
 Til that ye fleepen fafte by my fide.  
 And with that word he gan unto him calle  
 A squier, that was marfhal of his halle,  
 And told him certain thinges that he wolde.

This frefhe May hath freight hire way yholde  
 With all hire women unto Damian.  
 Doun by his beddes fide fit fhe than,  
 Comforting him as goodly as fhe may.

This Damian, whan that his time he fay, 9810  
 In fecree wife, his purfe, and eke his bill,  
 In which that he ywritten had his will,

Hath

Hath put into hire hond withouten more,  
 Save that he fiked wonder depe and fore,  
 And softely to hire right thus sayd he;  
 Mercie, and that ye nat discover me:  
 For I am ded, if that this thing be kid.

This purse hath she in with hire bosome hid,  
 And went hire way; ye get no more of me;  
 But unto January ycome is she, 9820  
 That on his beddes side fate ful soft.  
 He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful oft:  
 And layd him doun to slepe, and that anon.  
 She feined hire, as that she muste gon  
 Ther as ye wote that every wight mot nede;  
 And whan she of this bill hath taken hede,  
 She rent it all to cloutes at the last,  
 And in the privee softely it cast.

Who studieth now but faire freshe May?  
 Adoun by olde January she lay, 9830  
 That slepte, til the cough hath him awaked:  
 Anon he prayd hire stripen hire al naked,  
 He wolde of hire, he said, have som plesance;  
 And said, hire clothes did him encombrance.  
 And she obeieth him, be hire lese or loth.  
 But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,  
 How that he wrought, I dare nat to you tell,  
 Or wheder hire thought it paradis or hell;



82 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

But ther I let hem werken in hir wife  
Til evesong rang, and that they must arise. 9840

Were it by destinee, or aventure,  
Were it by influence, or by nature,  
Or constellation, that in swiche estat  
The heven flood at that time fortunat,  
As for to put a bill of Venus werkes  
(For alle thing hath time, as sayn thise clerkes)  
To any woman for to get hire love,  
I cannot say, but grete God above,  
That knoweth that non act is causeles,  
He deme of all, for I wol hold my pees. 9850

But soth is this, how that this freshe May  
Hath taken swiche impressioun that day  
Of pitee on this fike Damian,  
That fro hire herte she ne driven can  
The remembrance for to don him ese.  
Certain (thought she) whom that this thing displese  
I rekke not, for here I him assure,  
To love him best of any creature,  
Though he no more hadde than his sherte.

Lo, pitee renneth sone in gentil herte. 9860  
Here may ye seen, how excellent franchise  
In women is whan they hem narwe avise,  
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many on,  
That hath an herte as hard as any ston,

Which

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 83

Which wold han lette him sterven in the place  
Wel rather than han granted him hire grace :  
And hem rejoycen in hir cruel pride,  
And rekken not to ben an homicide.

This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,  
Right of hire hond a lettre maketh she, 9870  
In which she granteth him hire veray grace ;  
Ther lacked nought, but only day and place,  
Wher that she might unto his lust suffice :  
For it shal be, right as he wol devise.

And whan she saw hire time upon a day  
To visiten this Damian goth this May,  
And sotilly this lettre down she threst  
Under his pilwe, rede it if him lest.  
She taketh him by the hond, and hard him twist  
So secretly, that no wight of it wist, 9880  
And bade him ben all hol, and forth she went  
To January, whan he for hire sent.

Up riseth Damian the nexte morwe,  
Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe.  
He kembeth him, he proineth him and piketh,  
He doth all that his lady lust and liketh ;  
And eke to January he goth as lowe,  
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.  
He is so plesant unto every man,  
(For craft is all, who so that don it can) 9890



84 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

That every wight is fain to speke him good ;  
And fully in his ladies grace he stood.

Thus let I Damian about his nede,  
And in my tale forth I wol procede.

Som clerkes holden that felicitee  
Stant in delit, and therfore certain he  
This noble January, with all his might  
In honest wise as longeth to a knight,  
Shope him to liven ful deliciously.

His housing, his array, as honestly  
To his degree was maked as a kinges.

Amonges other of his honest thinges  
He had a gardin walled all with ston,  
So fayre a gardin wote I no wher non.

For out of doute I veraily suppose,  
That he that wrote the Romant of the Rose,  
Ne coude of it the beautee wel devise :

Ne Priapus ne mighte not suffise,  
Though he be god of gardins, for to tell  
The beautee of the gardin, and the well,  
That stood under a laurer alway grene.

Ful often time he Pluto and his quene  
Proserpina, and alle hir faerie,  
Disporten hem and maken melodie  
About that well, and daunced, as men told.

This noble knight, this January the old

Swiche

9900

9910

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 85

Swiche deintee hath in it to walke and pley,  
 That he wol suffre no wight bere the key,  
 Sauf he himself, for of the smal wicket  
 He bare alway of silver a cliket, 9920  
 With which whan that him list he it unshette.  
 And whan that he wold pay his wives dette  
 In somer seson thider wold he go,  
 And May his wif, and no wight but they two;  
 And thinges which that were not don a-bedde,  
 He in the gardin parfourned hem and spedde.

And in this wise many a mery day  
 Lived this January and freshe May,  
 But worldly joye may not alway endure  
 To January, ne to no creature. 9930

O soden hap, o thou fortune unstable,  
 Like to the Scorpion so deceivable,  
 That flatrest with thy hed whan thou wolt sting;  
 Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin enveniming.  
 O brotel joye, o swete poyson queinte,  
 O monstre, that so sotilly canst peinte  
 Thy giftes, under hewe of stedfastnesse,  
 That thou deceivest bothe more and lesse,  
 Why hast thou January thus deceived,  
 That haddeft him for thy ful frend received? 9940  
 And now thou hast beraft him both his eyen,  
 For sorwe of which desireth he to dyen.



## 86 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Alas ! this noble January free,  
 Amidde his lust and his prosperitee  
 Is waxen blind, and that al sodenly.  
 He wepeth and he waileth pitoufly ;  
 And therewithall, the fire of jalousie  
 (Lest that his wif shuld fall in som folie)  
 So brent his herte, that he wolde fain,  
 That som man had both him and hire yslain ; 9950  
 For nother after his deth, ne in his lif,  
 Ne wold he that she were no love ne wif,  
 But ever live as a widewe in clothes blake,  
 Sole as the turtle that hath lost hire make.  
 But at the last, after a moneth or tway  
 His forwe gan asswagen, soth to say.  
 For whan he wist it might non other be,  
 He patiently toke his adversitee :  
 Save out of doute he ne may nat forgon,  
 That he n'as jalous ever more in on : 9960  
 Which jalousie it was so outrageous,  
 That neither in halle, ne in non other hous,  
 Ne in non other place never the mo  
 He n'olde suffre hire for to ride or go,  
 But if that he had honde on hire alway.  
 For which ful often wepeth freshe May,  
 That loveth Damian so brenningly,  
 That she mooste either dien sodenly,

Or

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 87

Or elles she moſte han him as hire left :  
 She waited whan hire herte wold to-breſt. 9970

Upon that other ſide Damian  
 Becomen is the ſorwefulleſt man  
 That ever was, for neither night ne day  
 Ne might he ſpeke a word to freſhe May,  
 As to his purpoſ of no ſwicke matere,  
 But if that January muſt it here,  
 That had an hand upon hire evermo.  
 But natheles, by writing to and fro,  
 And privee ſignes, wiſt he what ſhe ment,  
 And ſhe knew eke the fin of his entent. 9980

O January, what might it thee availe,  
 Though thou might ſeen, as fer as ſhippes ſaile ?  
 For as good is blind to deceived be,  
 As be deceived, whan a man may ſee.  
 Lo Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,  
 For all that ever he coude pore or prien,  
 Yet was he blent, and, God wot, ſo ben mo,  
 That wenen wiſly that it be not ſo :  
 Paſſe over is an eſe, I ſay no more.

This freſhe May, of which I ſpake of yore, 9990  
 In warm wex hath enprented the cliket,  
 That January bare of the ſmal wicket,  
 By which into his gardin oft he went ;  
 And Damian that knew all hire entent



88 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

The cliket contrefeted prively ;  
 Ther n'is no more to say, but hastily  
 Som wonder by this cliket shal betide,  
 Which ye shul heren, if ye wol abide.

O noble Ovide, soth sayest thou, God wote,  
 What fleight is it if love be long and hote, 10000  
 That he n'll find it out in som manere ?  
 By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lere ;  
 Though they were kept ful long and streit over all,  
 They ben accorded, rowning thurgh a wall,  
 Ther no wight coude han founden swiche a fleichte.  
 But now to purpos ; er that daies eighte  
 Were passed of the month of Juil, befill,  
 That January hath caught so gret a will,  
 Thurgh egging of his wif, him for to play  
 In his gardin, and no wight but they tway, 10010  
 That in a morwe unto this May said he ;  
 Rise up, my wif, my love, my lady free ;  
 The turtles vois is herd, myn owen swete ;  
 The winter is gon, with all his raines wete.  
 Come forth now with thin eyen columbine,  
 Wel fairer ben thy brefts than ony wine.  
 The gardin is enclosed all aboute ;  
 Come forth, my white spouse, for out of doute,  
 Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, o wif :  
 No spot in thee n'as never in all thy lif, 10020  
 Come

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 29

Come forth, and let us taken our disport,  
I chese thee for my wif and my comfort.

Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.

On Damian a signe made she,

That he shuld go before with his cliket,

This Damian hath opened the wicket,

And in he stert, and that in swiche manere,

That no wight might him neyther see ne here, *see neyther where.*

And still he sit under a bush. Anon

This January, as blind as is a ston, 10030

With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,

Into this freshe gardin is ago,

And clapped to the wicket sodenly.

Now, wif, quod he, here n'is but thou, and I,

That art the creature that I best love :

For by that lord that sit in heven above,

I hadde lever dien on a knif,

Than thee offenden, dere trewe wif,

For Goddes sake, thinke how I thee chees,

Not for no coyetise douteles, 10040

But only for the love I had to thee.

And though that I be old and may not see,

Beth to me trewe, and I wol tell you why ;

Certes three thinges shal ye win therby ;

First love of Crist, and to yourself honour,

And all min heritage, toun and tour,

I yeve



90 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

I yeve it you, maketh chartres as you left :  
 This shal be don to-morwe er sonne rest,  
 So wisly God my soule bring to blisse ;  
 I pray you on this covenant ye me kisse. 10050  
 And though that I be jalous, wite me nought ;  
 Ye ben so depe enprented in my thought,  
 That whan that I confider your beautee,  
 And therwithall the unlikely elde of me,  
 I may not certes, though I shulde die,  
 Forbere to ben out of your compaignie  
 For veray love ; this is withouten doute :  
 Now kisse me, wif, and let us rome aboute.

This freshe May, whan she thise wordes herd,  
 Benignely to January answerd, 10060  
 But first and forward she began to wepe :  
 I have, quod she, a foule for to kepe  
 As wel as ye, and also min honour,  
 And of my wifhood thilke tendre flour,  
 Which that I have assured in your hond,  
 Whan that the preeft to you my body bond :  
 Wherefore I wol answere in this manere,  
 With leve of you, myn owen lord so dere.

I pray to God that never daw that day,  
 That I ne sterve, as foule as woman may, 10070  
 If ever I do unto my kin that shame,  
 Or elles I empeire so my name,

That

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 91

That I be false; and if I do that lakke,  
Do stripen me and put me in a sakke,  
And in the nexte river do me drenche:  
I am a gentil woman, and no wenche.  
Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewē,  
And women han repese of you ay newe.  
Ye con non other daliance, I leve,  
But speke to us as of untrust and repreve. 10080

And with that word she saw wher Damian  
Sat in the bush, and coughen she began;  
And with hire finger a signe made she,  
That Damian shuld climbe up on a tre,  
That charged was with fruit, and up he went:  
For veraily he knew all hire entent,  
And every signe that she coude make,  
Wel bet than January hire owen make.  
For in a lettre she had told him all  
Of this matere, how that he werken shall. 10090  
And thus I let him sitting in the pery,  
And January and May roming ful mery.

Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;  
Phebus of gold his stremes doun hath sent  
To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;  
He was that time in *Geminis*, I gesse,  
But litel fro his declination  
Of Cancer, Joves exaltation.

And



92 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

And so befell in that bright morwe tide,  
 That in the gardin, on the ferther side, 10100  
 Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,  
 And many a ladie in his compaignie  
 Følwing his wif, the quene Proserpina,  
 Which that he ravisshed out of Ethna,  
 While that she gadred floures in the mede,  
 (In Claudian ye may the story rede,  
 How that hire in his grisely carte he sette)  
 This king of Faerie adoun him sette  
 Upon a benche of turves freshe and grene,  
 And right anon thus said he to his quene. 10110

My wif, quod he, ther may no wight say nay,  
 The experience so preveth it every day,  
 The treson which that woman doth to man.  
 Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can  
 Notable of your untrouth and brotelnesse.

O Salomon, richest of all richeffe,  
 Fulfilled of sapience, and worldly glorie,  
 Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie  
 To every wight, that wit and reson can.  
 Thus praiseth he the bountee yet of man; 10120  
 Among a thousand men yet fond I on,  
 But of all women fond I never non.  
 Thus saith this king, that knewe your wikkednesse;  
 And Jesus, *Filius* Sirach, as I gesse,

He

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 93

He speketh of you but felden reverence.

A wilde fire, a corrupt pestilence,

So fall upon your bodies yet to-night :

Ne see ye not this honourable knight ?

Because, alas ! that he is blind and old,

His owen man shal make him cokewold. 10130

Lo, wher he sit, the lechour, in the tree,

Now wol I graunten of my majestee

Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,¹

That he shal have again his eyen sight,

Whan that his wif wol don him vilanie ;

Than shal he knowen all hire harlotrie,

Both in represe of hire and other mo.

Ye, fire, quod Proserpine, and wol ye so ?

Now by my modre Ceres soule I swere,

That I shal yeve hire suffisant answere, 10140

And alle women after for hire sake ;

That though they ben in any gilt ytake,

With face bold they shul hemselfe excuse,

And bere hem down that wolden hem accuse.

For lacke of answere, non of us shul dien.

Al had ye seen a thing with bothe youre eyen,

Yet shul we so visage it hardely,

And wepe and swere and chiden subtilly,

That ye shul ben as lewed as ben gees.

What rekketh me of your auctoritees ? 10150

I wote



94 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

I wote wel that this Jewe, this Salomon,  
Fond of us women fooles many on :  
But though that he ne fond no good woman,  
Ther hath yfonden many an other man  
Women ful good, and trewe, and vertuous ;  
Witnesse on hem that dwelte in Cristes hous,  
With martyrdom they preved hir constance.  
The Romain gestes maken remembrance  
Of many a veray trewe wif also.

But, fire, ne be not wroth, al be it so, 10160  
Though that he said he fond no good woman,  
I pray you take the sentence of the man :  
He ment thus, That in soverain bountee  
N'is non but God, no, nouthur he ne she.

Ey, for the veray God that n'is but on,  
What maken ye so moche of Salomon ?  
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous ?  
What though he riche were and glorious ?  
So made he eke a temple of false goddes,  
How might he don a thing that more forbode is ?  
Parde as faire as ye his name emplastre, 10171  
He was a lechour, and an idolastre,  
And in his elde he veray God forfoke.  
And if that God ne hadde (as faith the boke)  
Spared him for his fathers sake, he sholde  
Han lost his regne rather than he wolde.

I fete

*were riche*

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 95

I fete nat of all the vilanie,  
 That he of women wrote, a boterflie.  
 I am a woman, nedes moſte I ſpeke,  
 Or ſwell unto that time min herte breke. 10180  
 For ſin he ſaid that we ben janglereſſes,  
 As ever mote I brouken hole my treſſes,  
 I ſhal nat ſparen for no curteſie  
 To ſpeke him harm, that ſayth us vilanie.

Dame, quod this Pluto, be no lenger wroth,  
 I yeve it up : but ſin I ſwore min oth,  
 That I wold graunten him his fight again,  
 My word ſhal ſtand, that warne I you certain :  
 I am a king, it fit me not to lie.  
 And I, quod ſhe, am queene of Faerie. 10190  
 Hire anſwere ſhe ſhal han I undertake,  
 Let us no more wordes of it make.  
 Forſoth, quod he, I wol you not contrary.

Now let us turne again to January,  
 That in the gardin with his faire May  
 Singeth wel merier than the poppingay :  
 You love I beſt, and ſhal, and other non.

So long about the alleyes is he gon,  
 Til he was comen again to thilke pery,  
 Wher as this Damian ſitteth ful mery 10200  
 On high, among the freſhe leves grene.

This freſhe May, that is ſo bright and ſhene,

Gan



## 96 THE MARCHANTES TALE

Gan for to fike, and said ; alas my fide !  
 Now, fire, quod she, for ought that may betide  
 I moſte have of the peres that I ſee,  
 Or I moſte die, ſo fore longeth me  
 To eten of the ſinale peres grene :  
 Help for hire love that is of heven quene,  
 I tell you wel a woman in my plit  
 May have to fruit ſo gret an appetit, 10210  
 That ſhe may dien, but ſhe of it have.

Alas ! quod he, that I n'adde here a knave,  
 That coude climbe, alas ! alas ! (quod he)  
 For I am blinde. Ye, fire, no force, quod ſhe ;  
 But wold ye vouchesauf for Goddes ſake,  
 The pery in with your armes for to take,  
 (For wel I wot that ye miſtruſten me)  
 Than wold I climben wel ynough, (quod ſhe)  
 So I my fote might ſetten on your back.

Certes, ſaid he, therin ſhal be no lack, 10220  
 Might I you helpen mith min herte blood.

He ſtoupeth down, and on his back ſhe ſtood,  
 And caught hire by a twiſt, and up ſhe goth.  
 (Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,  
 I can nat gloſe, I am a rude man :)  
 And ſodenly anon this Damian  
 Gan pullen up the ſinock, and in he throng.

And whan that Pluto ſaw this grete wrong,

To

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 97

To January he yaf again his fight,  
And made him fee as wel as ever he might. 10230.

And whan he thus had caught his fight again,  
Ne was ther never man of thing so fain :  
But on his wif his thought was ever mo.

Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,  
And saw how Damian his wife had dressed  
In swiche manere, it may not ben exprested,  
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.  
And up he yaf a roring and a cry,  
As doth the mother whan the child shal die ;  
Out ! helpe ! alas ! harow ! he gan to cry ; 10240  
O stronge lady store, what doest thou ?

And she answered : sire, what ayleth you ?  
Have patience and reson in your minde,  
I have you holpen on both your eyen blinde.  
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lien,  
As me was taught to helpen with your eyen,  
Was nothing better for to make you see,  
Than strogle with a man upon a tree :  
God wot, I did it in ful good entent.

Strogle ! quod he, ye, algate in it went. 10250  
God yeve you both on shames deth to dien,  
He swived thee, I saw it with min eyen,  
And elles be I honged by the halfe.

Than is, quod she, my medicine al false.

Vp L. II.

H

For



98 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For certainly, if that ye mighten see,  
Ye wold not say thise wordes unto me.  
Ye have som glimfing, and no parfit sight.

I see, quod he, as wel as ever I might,  
(Thanked be God) with both min eyen two,  
And by my feith me thought he did thee so. 10260

Ye mase, ye masen, goode fire, quod she;  
This thank have I for I have made you see:  
Alas! quod she, that ever I was so kind.

Now, dame, quod he, let al passe out of mind:  
Come doun, my lese, and if I have missaid,  
God helpe me so, as I am evil appaid.  
But by my fadres soule, I wende have sein,  
How that this Damian had by thee lein,  
And that thy smock had lein upon his breft. 10269

Ye, fire, quod she, ye may wene as you lest:  
But, fire, a man that waketh of his slepe,  
He may not sodenly wel taken kepe  
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfitly,  
Til that he be adawed veraily.  
Right so a man, that long hath blind ybe,  
He may not sodenly so wel ysee,  
First whan his sight is newe comen agein,  
As he that hath a day or two ysein.  
Til that your sight yfateled be a while,  
Ther may ful many a fighte you begile. 10280

Beware

THE MARCHANTES TALE. 99

Beware, I pray you, for by heven king  
Ful many a man weneth to see a thing,  
And it is all another than it semeth :  
He which that misconceiveth oft misdemeth.

And with that word she lep down fro the tree.  
This January who is glad but he ?  
He kisseth hire, and clippeth hire ful oft,  
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful soft ;  
And to his paleis home he hath hire lad.  
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad. 10290  
Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie,  
God bleffe us, and his moder Seinte Marie.

THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

By Goddes mercy, sayde oure Hoste tho,  
Now swiche a wif I preie God kepe me fro.  
Lo, swiche sleightes and subtilitees  
In women ben ; for ay as besy as bees  
Ben they us fely men for to deceive,  
And from a sothe wol they ever weive.  
By this Marchantes tale it preveth wel.  
But natheles, as trewe as any stele, 10300  
I have a wif, though that she poure be ;  
But of hire tonge a labbing shrewe is she ;  
And yet she hath an hepe of vices mo.  
Therof no force ; let all swiche thinges go.

H 2

But



100 THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

But wete ye what ? in conseil be it feyde,  
 Me reweth fore I am unto hire teyde ;  
 For and I shulde rekene every vice,  
 Which that she hath, ywis I were to nice ;  
 And cause why, it shulde reported be  
 And told to hire of som of this compaignie, 10310  
 (Of whom it nedeth not for to declare,  
 Sin women connen utter swiche chaffare)  
 And eke my wit sufficeth not therto  
 To tellen all ; wherfore my tale is do.

Squier, come ner, if it youre wille be,  
 And say somwhat of love, for certes ye  
 Connen theron as moche as any man.  
 Nay, fire, quod he, but swiche thing as I can  
 With hertly wille, for I wol not rebelle  
 Agein youre lust, a tale wol I telle. 10320  
 Have me excused if I speke amis ;  
 My wille is good ; and lo, my tale is this.

THE SQUIERES TALE.

At Sarra, in the lond of Tartarie,  
 Ther dwelt a king that werreied Ruffie,  
 Thurgh which ther died many a doughty man ;  
 This noble king was cleped Cambuscan,  
 Which in his time was of so gret renoun,  
 That ther n'as no wher in no regioun

THE SQUIERES TALE. 101

So excellent a lord in alle thing :  
 Him lacked nought that longeth to a king, 10330  
 As of the secte of which that he was borne.  
 He kept his lay to which he was ysworne,  
 And therto he was hardy, wise, and riche,  
 And pitous and just, and alway yliche ;  
 Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable ;  
 Of his corage as any centre stable ;  
 Yong, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous,  
 As any bachelor of all his hous.  
 A faire person he was, and fortunate  
 And kept alway so wel real estat, 10340  
 That ther n'as no wher swiche another man.

This noble king, this Tartre Cambuscan,  
 Hadde two sones by Elfeta his wif,  
 Of which the eldest sone highte Algarfif,  
 That other was ycleped Camballo.

A doughter had this worthy king also,  
 That yongest was, and highte Canace ;  
 But for to tellen you all hire beautee,  
 It lith not in my tonge, ne in my conning,  
 I dare not undertake so high a thing : 10350  
 Min English eke is unsufficient,  
 It muste ben a Rethor excellent,  
 That coude his colours longing for that art,  
 If he shuld hire descriven ony part ;



102 THE SQUIERES TALE.

I am non swiche, I mote speke as I can.

And so befell, that whan this Cambuscan  
Hath twenty winter borne his diademe,  
As he was wont fro yere to yere I deme,  
He let the feste of his nativitee  
Don crien, thurghout Sarra his citee, 10360  
The last Idus of March, after the yere.

Phebus the sonne ful jolif was and clere,  
For he was nigh his exaltation  
In Martes face, and in his mansion  
In Aries, the colerike hote signe :  
Ful lusty was the wether and benigne,  
For which the foules again the sonne shene,  
What for the feson and the yonge grene,  
Ful loude songen hir affections :  
Hem semed han gotten hem protections 10370  
Again the swerd of winter kene and cold.

This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,  
In real vestiments, sit on his deis  
With diademe, ful high in his paleis ;  
And holt his feste so solempne and so riche,  
That in this world ne was ther non it liche.  
Of which if I shal tellen all the array,  
Than wold it occupie a somers day ;  
And eke it nedeth not for to devise  
At every cours the order of hir service, 10380

I wol

wol not tellen of hir strange fewes,  
 Ne of hir swannes, ne hir heronfewes.  
 Eke in that lond, as tellen knightes old,  
 Ther is som mete that is ful deintee hold,  
 That in this lond men recche of it ful final:  
 Ther n'is no man that may reporten al.  
 I wol not tarien you, for it is prime,  
 And for it is no fruit, but losse of time,  
 Unto my purpose I wol have recours.

And so befell that after the thridde cours 10390  
 While that this king sit thus in his nobley,  
 Herking his ministralles hir thinges pley  
 Beforne him at his bord deliciously,  
 In at the halle dore al sodenly  
 Ther came a knight upon a stede of bras,  
 And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;  
 Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,  
 And by his side a naked swerd hanging:  
 And up he rideth to the highe bord.  
 In all the halle ne was ther spoke a word, 10400  
 For mervaille of this knight; him to behold  
 Ful besily they waiten yong and old.

This strange knight that come thus sodenly  
 Al armed save his hed ful richely,  
 Salueth king and quene, and lordes alle  
 By order, as they saten in the halle,



With so high reverence and obfervance,  
 As wel in fpeche as in his contenance,  
 That Gawain with his olde curtesie,  
 Though he were come agen out of faerie, 10419  
 Ne coude him not amenden with a word.  
 And after this, beforne the highe bord  
 He with a manly vois fayd his meffage,  
 After the forme used in his langage,  
 Withouten vice of fillable or of letter.  
 And for his tale fhulde fеме the better,  
 Accordant to his wordes was his chere,  
 As techeth art of fpeche hem that it lere,  
 Al be it that I cannot founne his ftile,  
 Ne cannot climben over fo high a ftile, 10429  
 Yet fay I this, as to comun entent,  
 Thus much amounteth all that ever he ment,  
 If it fo be that I have it in mind.

He fayd; The king of Arabie and of Inde,  
 My liege lord, on this folempne day  
 Salueth you as he beft can and may,  
 And fendeth you in honour of your fefte  
 By me, that am al redy at your hefte,  
 This ftede of bras, that efily and wel  
 Can in the fpace of a day naturel, 10430  
 (This is to fayn, in four and twenty houres)  
 Wher fo you lift, in drought or elles fhoures,

Beren

THE SQUIERES TALE. 105

Beren your body into every place,  
 To which your herte willeth for to pace,  
 Withouten wemme of you, thurgh foule or faire.  
 Or if you list to flee as high in the aire,  
 As doth an egle, whan him list to fore,  
 This same stede shal bere you evermore  
 Withouten harme, till ye be ther you left,  
 (Though that ye slepen on his back or rest) 10440  
 And turne again, with writhing of a pin.  
 He that it wrought, he coude many a gin;  
 He waited many a constellation,  
 Or he had don this operation,  
 And knew ful many a fele and many a bond.

This mirrour eke, that I have in min hond,  
 Hath swiche a might, that men may in it see,  
 Whan ther shal falle ony adversitee  
 Unto your regne, or to yourself also,  
 And openly, who is your frend or fo. 10450  
 And over all this, if any lady bright  
 Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,  
 If he be false, she shal his treson see,  
 His newe love, and all his subtiltee  
 So openly, that ther shal nothing hide.

Wherfore again this lusty somer tide  
 This mirrour and this ring, that ye may se,  
 He hath sent to my lady Canace,

Your



Your excellent daughter that is here.

The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here, 10460  
Is this, that if hire list it for to were  
Upon hire thombe, or in hire purse it bere,  
Ther is no foule that fleeth under heven,  
That she ne shal wel understond his steven,  
And know his mening openly and plaine,  
And answere him in his langage again :  
And every gras that groweth upon rote  
She shal eke know, and whom it wol do bote,  
All be his woundes never so depe and wide.

This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side, 10470  
Swiche vertue hath, that what man that it finite,  
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and bite,  
Were it as thicke as is a braunched oke :  
And what man that is wounded with the stroke  
Shal never be hole, til that you list of grace  
To stroke him with the platte in thilke place  
Ther he is hurt; this is as much to fain,  
Ye moten with the platte swerd again  
Stroke him in the wound, and it wol close.  
This is the veray soth withouten glose, 10480  
It failleth not, while it is in your hold.

And whan this knight hath thus his tale told,  
He rideth out of halle, and down he light :  
His stede, which that shone as sonne bright,

Stant

Stant in the court as stille as any ston.  
 This knight is to his chambre ladde anon,  
 And is unarmed, and to the mete yfette.  
 Thise presents ben ful richelich yfette,  
 This is to fain, the swerd and the mirrour,  
 And borne anon into the highe tour, 10490  
 With certain officers ordained therfore;  
 And unto Canace the ring is bore  
 Solempnely, ther she sat at the table;  
 But fikerly, withouten any fable,  
 The hors of bras, that may not be remued;  
 It stant, as it were to the ground yglued;  
 Ther may no man out of the place it drive  
 For non engine, of windas, or polive:  
 And cause why, for they con not the craft,  
 And therfore in the place they han it last, 10500  
 Til that the knight hath taught him the manere  
 To voiden him, as ye shal after here.

Gret was the prees, that swarmed to and fro  
 To gauren on this hors that stondeth so:  
 For it so high was, and so brod and long,  
 So wel proportioned for to be strong,  
 Right as it were a stede of Lumbardie;  
 Therwith so horfly, and so quik of eye,  
 As it a gentil Poileis courser were:  
 For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere

10510  
 Nature

*hem*



108 THE SQUIERES TALE.

Nature ne art ne coud him not amend  
In no degree, as all the peple wend.

But evermore hir moste wonder was,  
How that it coude gon, and was of bras;  
It was of faerie, as the peple femed.  
Diverse folk diversely han demed;  
As many heds, as many wittes ben.  
They murmured, as doth a swarme of been,  
And maden skilles after hir fantasies,  
Reherfing of the olde poetries, 10520  
And sayd it was ylike the Pegasee,  
The hors that hadde winges for to flee,  
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Sinon,  
That broughte Troye to destruction,  
As men moun in thise olde gestes rede.

Min herte (quod on) is evermore in drede,  
I trow som men of armes ben therin,  
That shapen hem this citee for to win:  
It were right good that al swiche thing were know.  
Another rownded to his felaw low, 10530  
And sayd, He lieth, for it is rather like  
An apparence ymade by som magike,  
As jogelours plaien at thise festes grete.  
Of fondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,  
As lewed peple demen comunly  
Of thinges, that ben made more subtilly,

Than

THE SQUIERES TALE. 109

Than they can in hir lewednesse comprehend,  
They demen gladly to the badder ende.

And som of hem wondred on the mirrour,  
That born was up in to the maister tour, 10540  
How men mighte in it swiche thinges see.

Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be  
Naturelly by compositions

Of angles, and of flie reflections;

And saide that in Rome was swiche on.

They speke of Alhazen and Vitellon,

And Aristotle, that writen in hir lives

Of queinte mirrours, and of prospectives,

As knowen they, that han hir bookes herd.

And other folk han wondred on the swerd, 10550  
That wolde percen thurghout every thing:

And fell in speche of Telephus the king,

And of Achilles for his queinte spere,

For he coude with it bothe hele and dere,

Right in swiche wise as men may with the swerd,

Of which right now ye have yourselven herd.

They speken of sondry harding of metall,

And speken of medicines therwithall,

And how, and whan it shuld yharded be,

Which is unknow algates unto me. 10560

Tho speken they of Canacees ring,

And saiden all, that swiche a wonder thing

Of



110 THE SQUIERES TALE.

Of craft of ringes herd they never non,  
Save that he Moises and king Salomon  
Hadden a name of conning in swiche art.  
Thus fain the peple, and drawen hem apart.

But natheles som faiden that it was  
Wonder to maken of ferne ashen glas,  
And yet is glas nought like ashen of ferne,  
But for they han yknowen it so ferne, 10570  
Therefore cefeth hir jangling and hir wonder.

As fore wondren som on cause of thonder,  
On ebbe and flood, on goffomer, and on mist,  
And on all thing, til that the cause is wist.

Thus janglen they, and demen and devise,  
Til that the king gan fro his bord arise.

Phebus hath left the angle meridional,  
And yet ascending was the beste real,  
The gentil Leon, with his Aldrian, 10579  
Whan that this Tartre king, this Cambuscan,  
Rose from his bord, ther as he sat ful hie :  
Beforen him goth the loude minstralcie,  
Til he come to his chambre of parements,  
Ther as they founden divers instruments,  
That it is like an heven for to here.

Now dauncen lusty Venus children dere :  
For in the fish hir lady sat ful hie,  
And loketh on hem with a frendly eye.

This

THE SQUIERES TALE. 111

This noble king is fet upon his trone;  
This straunge knight is fet to him ful sone, 10590  
And on the daunce he goth with Canace.

Here is the revell and the jolitee,  
That is not able a dull man to devise:  
He must han knowen love and his servise,  
And ben a festlich man, as fresh as May,  
That shulde you devisen swiche array.

Who coude tellen you the forme of daunces  
So uncouth, and so freshe contenaunces,  
Swiche subtil lokings and diffimulings,  
For dred of jalous mennes apperceivings? 10600  
No man but Launcelot, and he is ded.  
Therefore I passe over all this lustyhed,  
I say no more, but in this jolineesse  
I lete hem, til men to the souper hem dresse.

The steward bit the spices for to hie  
And eke the win, in all this melodie;  
The ushers and the squierie ben gon,  
The spices and the win is come anon:  
They ete and drinke, and whan this had an end,  
Unto the temple, as reson was, they wend: 10610  
The service don, they soupen all by day.

What nedeth you reherfen hir array?  
Eche man wot wel, that at a kinges fest  
Is plentee, to the most and to the left,

And



112 THE SQUIERES TALE.

And deintees mo than ben in my knowing.

At after souper goth this noble king  
To feen this hors of bras, with all a route  
Of lordes and of ladies him aboute.

Swiche wondring was ther on this hors of bras,  
That fin the gret affege of Troye was, 10620  
Ther as men wondred on an hors also,

Ne was ther swiche a wondring, as was tho.  
But finally the king asketh the knight  
The vertue of this courser, and the might,  
And praied him to tell his governaunce.

This hors anon gan for to trip and daunce,  
Whan that the knight laid hond up on his rein,  
And faide, fire, ther n'is no more to fain,  
But whan you list to riden any where,  
Ye moten trill a pin, stant in his ere, 10630  
Which I shal tellen you betwixt us two,  
Ye moten nempne him to what place also,  
Or to what contree that you list to ride.

And whan ye come ther as you list abide,  
Bid him descend, and trill another pin,  
(For therin lieth the effect of all the gin)  
And he wol doun descend and don your will,  
And in that place he wol abiden still :  
Though al the world had the contrary swore,  
He shal not thennes be drawe ne be bore. 10640

Or

Or if you list to bid him thennes gon,  
 Trille this pin, and he wol vanish anon  
 Out of the fight of every maner wight,  
 And come agen, be it by day or night,  
 Whan that you list to clepen him again  
 In swiche a guise, as I shal to you sain  
 Betwixen you and me, and that ful sone.  
 Ride whan you list, ther n'is no more to done.

Enfourmed whan the king was of the knight,  
 And hath conceived in his wit aright 10650  
 The maner and the forme of all this thing,  
 Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty king  
 Repaireth to his revel, as beforne.  
 The bridel is in to the tour yborne,  
 And kept among his jewels lefe and dere :  
 The hors vanisht, I n'ot in what manere,  
 Out of hir fight, ye get no more of me :  
 But thus I lete in lust and jolitee  
 This Cambuscan his lordes festeying,  
 Til that wel nigh the day began to spring. 10660

*Pars secunda.*

The norice of digestion, the slepe,  
 Gan on hem winke, and bad hem taken kepe,  
 That mochel drinke, and labour wol have rest :  
 And with a galping mouth hem all he kest,



And said, that it was time to lie adoun,  
 For blood was in his dominatioun :  
 Cherisheth blood, natures frend, quod he.

They thanken him galping, by two by three ;  
 And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,  
 As slepe hem bade, they toke it for the best. 10670

Hir dreames shul not now be told for me ;  
 Ful were hir hedes of fumositee,  
 That causeth dreame, of which ther is no charge.  
 They slepen til that it was prime large,  
 The moste part, but it were Canace ;  
 She was ful mesurable, as women be.  
 For of hire father had she take hire leve  
 To gon to rest, sone after it was eve ;  
 Hire liste not appalled for to be,  
 Nor on the morwe unfeetliche for to see ; 10680  
 And slept hire firste slepe, and than awoke.  
 For swiche a joye she in hire herte toke  
 Both of hire queinte ring, and of hire mirrour,  
 That twenty time she chaunged hire colour ;  
 And in hire slepe right for the impressioun  
 Of hire mirrour she had a visioun.  
 Wherefore, or that the sonne gan up glide,  
 She clepeth upon hire maistresse hire beside,  
 And saide, that hire luste for to arise.

Thise olde women, that ben gladly wise, 10690  
 As

As is hire maistresse, answerd hire anon,  
 And said; Madame, whider wol ye gon  
 Thus erly? for the folk ben all in rest.

I wol, quod she, arisen (for me left  
 No longer for to slepe) and walken aboute.

Hire maistresse clepeth women a gret route,  
 And up they risen, wel a ten or twelve;  
 Up riseth freshe Canace hireselve,  
 As rody and bright, as the yonge sonne,  
 That in the ram is foure degrees yronne; 10700  
 No higher was he, whan she redy was;  
 And forth she walketh esily a pas,  
 Arrayed after the lusty feson fote  
 Lightely for to playe, and walken on fote,  
 Nought but with five or sixe of hire meinie;  
 And in a trenche forth in the park goth she.

The vapour, which that fro the erthe glode,  
 Maketh the sonne to seme rody and brode:  
 But natheles, it was so faire a sight,  
 That it made all hir hertes for to light, 10710  
 What for the feson, and the morwening,  
 And for the foules that she herde sing.  
 For right anon she wiste what they ment  
 Right by hir song, and knew al hir entent.

The knotte, why that every tale is tolde,  
 If it be taried til the lust be colde



116 THE SQUIERES TALE.

Of hem, that han it herkened after yore,  
The favour passeth ever lenger the more,  
For fulsumnesse of the prolixitee :

And by that same reson thinketh me 10720  
I shuld unto the knotte condescende,  
And maken of hire walking sone an ende.

Amidde a tree for-dry, as white as chalk,  
As Canace was playing in hire walk,  
Ther sat a faucon over hire hed ful hie,  
That with a pitous vois so gan to crie,  
That all the wood resounded of hire cry,  
And beten had hireself so pitously  
With both hire winges, til the rede blood  
Ran endelong the tree, ther as she stood. 10730  
And ever in on alway she cried and shrighit,  
And with hire bek hireselfen she so twight,  
That ther n'is tigre, ne no cruel best,  
That dwelleth other in wood, or in forest,  
That n'olde han wept, if that he wepen coude,  
For sorwe of hire, she shrighit alway so loude.

For ther was never yet no man on live,  
If that he coude a faucon wel describe,  
That herde of swiche another of fayrenesse  
As wel of plumage, as of gentileffe, 10740  
Of shape, of all that might yrekened be.  
A faucon peregrine semed she

Of

Of fremde lond, and ever as she stood,  
 She fwooned now and now for lack of blood,  
 Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree.

This faire kinges doughter Canace,  
 That on hire finger bare the queinte ring,  
 Thurgh which she understood wel every thing  
 That any foule may in his leden fain,  
 And coude answere him in his leden again, 10750  
 Hath understonden what this faucon seyde,  
 And wel neigh for the routhe almost she deyde :  
 And to the tree she goth ful hastily,  
 And on this faucon loketh pitoufly,  
 And held hire lap abroad, for wel she wist  
 The faucon muste fallen from the twist  
 Whan that she fwooned next, for faute of blood.  
 A longe while to waiten hire she stood,  
 Til at the last she spake in this manere  
 Unto the hauk, as ye shul after here. 10760

What is the cause, if it be for to tell,  
 That ye ben in this furial peine of hell?  
 Quod Canace unto this hauk above;  
 Is this for forwe of deth, or losse of love?  
 For as I trow, thise be the causes two,  
 That causen most a gentil herte wo.  
 Of other harme it nedeth not to speke,  
 For ye yourself upon yourself awreke,



## 118 THE SQUIERES TALE.

Which preveth wel, that other ire or drede  
 Mote ben encheson of your cruel dede, 10770  
 Sin that I se non other wight you chace.  
 For the love of God, as doth yourselven grace :  
 Or what may be your helpe ? for west ne est  
 Ne saw I never er now no brid ne best,  
 That ferde with himself so pitoufly.  
 Ye fle me with your sorwe veraily,  
 I have of you so gret compassioun.  
 For Goddes love come fro the tree adoun ;  
 And as I am a kinges doughter trewe,  
 If that I veraily the causes knowe 10780  
 Of your distre, if it lay in my might,  
 I wold amend it, or that it were night,  
 As willy help me the gret God of kind.  
 And herbes that I right ynough yfind,  
 To helen with your hurtes hastily.

Tho thright this faucon yet more pitoufly  
 Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,  
 And lith adwoun, as ded as lith a ston,  
 Til Canace hath in hire lappe hire take,  
 Unto that time she gan of swounne awake : 10790  
 And after that she out of swounne abraide,  
 Right in hire haukes leden thus she sayde.

That pitee renneth sone in gentil herte  
 (Feeling his similitude in peines sinerte)

Is proved alle day, as men may see,  
 As wel by werke as by auctoritee,  
 For gentil herte kitheth gentilleffe.  
 I see wel, that ye have on my distresse  
 Compassion, my faire Canace,  
 Of veray womanly benignitee, 10800

That nature in your principles hath set.  
 But for non hope for to fare the bet,  
 But for to obey unto your herte free,  
 And for to maken other yware by me,  
 As by the whelpe chastised is the leon,  
 Right for that cause and that conclusion,  
 While that I have a leiser and a space,  
 Min harme I wol confessen er I pace.  
 And ever while that on hire forwe told,  
 That other wept, as she to water wold, 10810  
 Til that the faucon bad hire to be fill,  
 And with a fike right thus she said hire till.

Ther I was bred, (alas that ilke day !)  
 And fostred in a roche of marble gray  
 So tendrely, that nothing ailed me,  
 I ne wist not what was adversitee,  
 Til I coud flee ful high under the skie.

Tho dwelled a tercelet me faste by,  
 That semed welle of alle gentilleffe,  
 Al were he ful of treson and falsenesse, 10820



It was so wrapped under humble chere,  
 And under hew of trouth in swiche manere,  
 Under plesance, and under besy peine,  
 That no wight coud have wend he coude feine,  
 So depe in greyn he died his coloures.  
 Right as a serpent hideth him under floures;  
 Til he may see his time for to bite;  
 Right so this god of loves hypocrite  
 Doth so his ceremonies and obeisance,  
 And kepeth in semblaunt alle his observance, 10830  
 That souneth unto gentilleffe of love.  
 As on a tombe is all the faire above,  
 And under is the corps, swiche as ye wote;  
 Swiche was this hypocrite both cold and hote,  
 And in this wise he served his entent,  
 That, save the fend, non wiste what he ment:  
 Til he so long had weped and complained,  
 And many a yere his service to me fained,  
 Till that min herte, to pitous and to nice,  
 Al innocent of his crowned malice, 10840  
 For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,  
 Upon his othes and his feuretee,  
 Graunted him love, on this condition,  
 That evermo min honour and renoun  
 Were saved, bothe privee and apert;  
 This is to say, that, after his desert,

I yave

I yave him all min herte and all my thought,  
 (God wote, and he, that other wayes nought)  
 And toke his herte in chaunge of min for ay.  
 But soth is said, gon fithen is many a day, 10850  
 A trewe wight and a theef thinken not on.

And whan he saw the thing so fer ygon,  
 That I had granted him fully my love,  
 In swiche a guise as I have said above,  
 And yeven him my trewe herte as free  
 As he swore that he yaf his herte to me,  
 Anon this tigre, ful of doublenessse,  
 Fell on his knees with so gret humbleesse,  
 With so high reverence, as by his chere,  
 So like a gentil lover of manere, 10860  
 So ravished, as it semed, for the joye,  
 That never Jason, ne Paris of Troye,  
 Jason? certes, ne never other man,  
 Sin Lamech was, that alderfirst began  
 To loven two, as writen folk beforne,  
 Ne never fithen the first man was borne,  
 Ne coude man by twenty thousand part  
 Contrefete the sophimes of his art;  
 Ne were worthy to unbocke his galoche,  
 Ther doublenessse of faining shuld approche, 10870  
 Ne coude so thanke a wight, as he did me.  
 His maner was an heven for to see

To



To any woman, were she never so wise ;  
 So painted he and kempt, at point devise,  
 As wel his wordes, as his contenance.  
 And I so loved him for his obeifance,  
 And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,  
 That if so were that any thing him smerte,  
 Al were it never so lite, and I it wist,  
 Me thought I felt deth at myn herte twist. 10880  
 And shortly, so ferforth this thing is went,  
 That my will was his willes instrument ;  
 This is to say, my will obeied his will  
 In alle thing, as fer as reson fill,  
 Keping the boundes of my worship ever :  
 Ne never had I thing so lese, ne lever,  
 As him, God wot, ne never shal no mo.

This lasteth lenger than a yere or two,  
 That I supposed of him nought but good.  
 But finally, thus at the last it stood, 10890  
 That fortune wolde that he muste twin  
 Out of that place, which that I was in.  
 Wher me was wo, it is no question ;  
 I cannot make of it description.  
 For o thing dare I tellen boldely,  
 I know what is the peine of deth therby,  
 Swiche harme I felt, for he ne might byleve,  
 So on a day of me he toke his leve,

So forweful eke, that I wend veraily,  
 That he had felt as mochel harme as I, 10900  
 Whan that I herd him speke, and saw his hewe.  
 But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,  
 And eke that he repairen shuld again  
 Within a litel while, soth to fain,  
 And reson wold eke that he muste go  
 For his honour, as often happeth so,  
 That I made vertue of necessitye,  
 And toke it wel, sin that it muste be.  
 As I best might, I hid fro him my sorwe,  
 And toke him by the hond, Seint John to borwe,  
 And said him thus; lo, I am youres all, 10911  
 Beth swiche as I have ben to you and shall.

What he answerd, it nedeth not reherse;  
 Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?  
 Whan he hath al wel said, than hath he done.  
 Therefore behoveth him a ful long sponse,  
 That shal ete with a fend; thus herd I say.

So at the last he muste forth his way,  
 And forth he fleeth, til he come ther him left.  
 Whan it came him to purpos for to rest, 10920  
 I trow that he had thilke text in mind,  
 That alle thing repairing to his kind  
 Gladeth himself; thus fain men as I gesse:  
 Men loven of propre kind newefangelnesse,

As



As briddes don, that men in cages fede.  
 For though thou night and day take of hem hede,  
 And strew hir cage faire and soft as filke,  
 And give hem sugre, hony, bred, and milke,  
 Yet right anon as that his dore is up,  
 He with his feet wol spurnen down his cup, 10930  
 And to the wood he wol, and wormes etc ;  
 So newefangel ben they of hir mete,  
 And loven noveltees of propre kind ;  
 No gentilleffe of blood ne may hem bind.

So ferd this tercelet, alas the day !  
 Though he were gentil borne, and fresh, and gay,  
 And goodly for to seen, and humble, and free,  
 He saw upon a time a kite flee,  
 And sodenly he loved this kite so,  
 That all his love is clene fro me ago : 10940  
 And hath his trouthe falsed in this wise.  
 Thus hath the kite my love in hire service,  
 And I am lorn withouten remedy.

And with that word this faucon gan to cry,  
 And swouneth eft in Canacees barme.  
 Gret was the forwe for that haukes harme,  
 That Canace and all hire women made ;  
 They n'isten how they might the faucon glade.  
 But Canace home bereth hire in hire lap,  
 And softely in plastes gan hire wrap, 10950  
 Ther

Ther as she with hire bek had hurt hireselfe.

Now cannot Canace but herbes delve  
 Out of the ground, and maken falves newe  
 Of herbes precious and fine of hewe,  
 To helen with this hauk; fro day to night  
 She doth hire besineffe, and all hire might.  
 And by hire beddes hed she made a mew,  
 And covered it with velouettes blew,  
 In signe of trouth, that is in woman sene;  
 And all without the mew is peinted grene, 10960  
 In which were peinted all thise false foules,  
 As ben thise tidifes, tercelettes, and owles;  
 And pies, on hem for to cry and chide,  
 Right for despit were peinted hem beside.

Thus lete I Canace hire hauk keping.  
 I wol no more as now speke of hire ring,  
 Til it come eft to purpos for to fain,  
 How that this faucon gat hire love again  
 Repentant, as the story telleth us,  
 By mediation of Camballus 10970  
 The kinges sone, of which that I you told.  
 But hennesforth I wol my proceffe hold  
 To speke of adventures, and of batailles,  
 That yet was never herd so gret mervailles.

First wol I tellen you of Cambuscan,  
 That in his time many a citee wan:

And



And after wol I speke of Algarfif,  
 How that he wan Theodora to his wif,  
 For whom ful oft in gret peril he was,  
 Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras. 10980  
 And after wol I speke of Camballo,  
 That fought in listes with the brethren two  
 For Canace, er that he might hire winne,  
 And ther I left I wol again beginne.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE FRANKELEINES PROLOGUE.

In faith, Squier, thou hast thee wel yquit  
 And gentilly, I preise wel thy wit,  
 Quod the Frankelein; considering thin youthe,  
 So felingly thou spekest, fire, I aloue the  
 As to my dome, ther is non that is here,  
 Of eloquence that shal be thy pere, 10990  
 If that thou live; God yeve thee goode chance,  
 And in vertue send thee continuance,  
 For of thy speking I have gret deintee.  
 I have a sone, and by the Trinitee  
 It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,  
 Though it right now were fallen in my hond,  
 He were a man of swiche discretion,  
 As that ye ben: fie on possession,

THE FRANKLEINES PROLOGUE. 127

But if a man be vertuous withal.

I have my sone snibbed, and yet shal, 11000

For he to vertue listeth not to entend,

But for to play at dis, and to dispend,

And lese all that he hath, is his usage;

And he had lever talken with a page,

Than to commune with any gentil wight,

Ther he might leren gentilleffe aright.

Straw for your gentilleffe, quod our hoste.

What? Frankelein, parde, fire, wel thou wost,

That eche of you mote tellen at the lest

A tale or two, or breken his beheft. 11010

That know I wel, fire, quod the Frankelein,

I pray you haveth me not in disdein,

Though I to this man speke a word or two.

Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.

Gladly, fire hoste, quod he, I wol obey

Unto your will; now herkeneth what I fey;

I wol you not contrarien in no wise,

As fer as that my wittes may suffice.

I pray to God that it may plesen you,

Than wot I wel that it is good ynow. 11020

Thise olde gentil Bretons in hir dayes

Of diverse adventures maden layes,

Rimeyed in hir firste Breton tonge:

Which layes with hir instruments they songe,

Or



# 118 THE FRANKLEINES PROLOGUE.

Or elles redden hem for hir plesance,  
And on of hem have I in remembrance,  
Which I shal sayn with good wille as I can.

But, fires, because I am a borel man,  
At my beginning first I you beseeche  
Have me excused of my rude speche. 11030  
I lerned never rhetorike certain;  
Thing that I speke, it mote be bare and plain.  
I slept never on the mount of Pernafo,  
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Cicero.  
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,  
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,  
Or elles swiche as men die with or peinte;  
Colours of rhetorike ben to me queinte;  
My spirit feleth not of swiche matere.  
But if you lust my tale shul ye here. 11040

## THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

IN Armorike, that called is Bretaigne,  
Ther was a knight, that loved and did his peine  
To serve a ladie in his beste wise;  
And many a labour, many a gret emprise  
He for his lady wrought, or she were wonne:  
For she was on the fairest under sonne,  
And eke therto comen of so high kinrede,  
That wel unnethes durst this knight for drede

Tell

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 129

Tell hire his wo, his peine, and his distresse.  
 But at the last, she for his worthinesse, 11050  
 And namely for his meke obeyfance,  
 Hath swiche a pitee caught of his penance,  
 That prively she fell of his accord  
 To take him for hire hufbond and hire lord,  
 (Of swiche lordship as men han over hir wives)  
 And, for to lede the more in blisse hir lives,  
 Of his free will he swore hire as a knight,  
 That never in all his lif he day ne night  
 Ne shulde take upon him no maistrie  
 Agains hire will, ne kithe hire jaloufie, 11060  
 But hire obey, and folwe hire will in al,  
 As any lover to his lady shal:  
 Save that the name of foverainetee  
 That wold he han for shame of his degree.  
 She thonked him, and with ful gret humbleffe  
 She saide; fire, fin of your gentilleffe  
 Ye profren me to have so large a reine,  
 Ne wolde God never betwix us tweine,  
 As in my gilt, were either werre or strif:  
 Sire, I wol be your humble trewe wif, 11070  
 Have here my trouth, till that myn herte breste.  
 Thus ben they both in quiete and in reste.

For o thing, fires, fausly dare I feie,  
 That frendes everich other must obeie,



130 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

If they wol longe holden compaignie.  
 Love wol not be constreined by maistrie.  
 Whan maistrie cometh, the God of love anon  
 Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon.  
 Love is a thing, as any spirit free.  
 Women of kind desiren libertee, 11080  
 And not to be constreined as a thral;  
 And so don men, if sothly I say shal.  
 Loke who that is most patient in love,  
 He is at his advantage all above.  
 Patience is an high vertue certain,  
 For it venquisheth, as thise clerkes sain,  
 Thinges that rigour never shulde atteine.  
 For every word men may not chide or pleine.  
 Lerneth to suffren, or, so mote I gon,  
 Ye shul it lerne whether ye wol or non. 11090  
 For in this world certain no wight ther is,  
 That he ne doth or sayth somtime amis.  
 Ire, fikenesse, or constellation,  
 Win, wo, or changing of complexion,  
 Caufeth ful oft to don amis or speken:  
 On every wrong a man may not be wroken.  
 After the time must be temperance  
 To every wight that can of governance.  
 And therfore hath this worthy wise knight,  
 (To liven in ese) suffrance hire behight; 11100  
 And

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 131

And she to him ful wisly gan to swere,  
That never shuld ther be defaute in here.

Here may men seen an humble wise accord:  
Thus hath she take hire servant and hire lord,  
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.

Than was he both in lordship and servage?  
Servage? nay, but in lordship al above,  
Sin he hath both his lady and his love:  
His lady certes, and his wif also,  
The which that law of love accordeth to. IIIIO

And whan he was in this prosperitee,  
Home with his wif he goth to his contree,  
Not fer fro Penmark, ther his dwelling was,  
Wher as he liveth in blisse and in solas.

Who coude tell, but he had wedded be,  
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee,  
That is betwix an husbond and his wif?  
A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,  
Til that this knight, of which I spake of thus,  
That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus, IIIIO  
Shope him to gon and dwelle a yere or twaine  
In Englelond, that cleped was eke Bretaigne,  
To seke in armes worship and honour:

(For all his lust he set in swiche labour)  
And dwelte ther two yere; the book saith thus.

Now wol I stint of this Arviragus,

K 2

And



132 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

And speke I wol of Dorigene his wif,  
 That loveth hire husbond as hire hertes lif.  
 For his absence wepeth she and siketh,  
 As don thise noble wives whan hem liketh; 11130  
 She morneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, pleineth;  
 Desir of his presence hire so distraineth,  
 That all this wide world she set at nought.  
 Hire frendes, which that knew hire hevy thought,  
 Comforten hire in all that ever they may;  
 They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day,  
 That causeles she sleth hireself, alas!  
 And every comfort possible in this cas  
 They don to hire, with all hir besinesse,  
 Al for to make hire leve hire hevinesse. 11140

By proceffe, as ye knowen everich on,  
 Men mowe so longe graven in a ston,  
 Til som figure therin emprented be:  
 So long han they comforted hire, til she  
 Received hath, by hope and by reson,  
 The emprenting of hir consolation,  
 Thurgh which hire grete sorwe gan assuage;  
 She may not alway duren in swiche rage.  
 And eke Arviragus, in all this care,  
 Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare, 11150  
 And that he wol come hastily again,  
 Or elles had this sorwe hire herte slain.

Hire

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 133

Hire frendes faw hire forwe gan to flake,  
 And preiden hire on knees for Goddes sake  
 To come and romen in hir compaignie,  
 Away to driven hire derke fantasie :  
 And finally she granted that request,  
 For wel she faw that it was for the best.

Now stood hire castel faste by the see,  
 And often with hire frendes walked she, 11160  
 Hire to disporten on the bank an hie,  
 Wher as she many a ship and barge fie,  
 Sailing hir cours, wher as hem list to go.  
 But than was that a parcel of hire wo,  
 For to hireself ful oft, alas ! said she,  
 Is ther no ship, of so many as I see,  
 Wol bringen home my lord ? than were my herte  
 Al warished of his bitter peines smerte.

Another time wold she sit and thinke,  
 And cast her eyen downward fro the brinke ; 11170  
 But whan she faw the grisly rockes blake,  
 For veray fere so wold hire herte quake,  
 That on hire feet she might hire not sustene.  
 Than wold she sit adoun upon the grene,  
 And pitoufly into the see behold,  
 And say right thus, with careful fikes cold,

Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveance  
 Ledest this world by certain governance,



134 THE FRANKLEINES TALE,

In idel, as men fain, ye nothing make.  
 But, lord, thise grisly fendly rockes blake, 11180  
 That semen rather a foule confusion  
 Of werk, than any faire creation  
 Of swiche a parfit wise God and stable,  
 Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable?  
 For by this werk, north, south, ne west, ne est,  
 Ther n'is yofstred man, ne brid, ne best:  
 It doth no good to my wit, but anoyeth.  
 See ye not, lord, how mankind it destroyeth?  
 An hundred thousand bodies of mankind  
 Han rockes slain, al be they not in mind; 11190  
 Which mankind is so faire part of thy werk,  
 Thou madest it like to thyn owen merk.  
 Than, semeth it, ye had a gret chertee  
 Toward mankind; but how than may it be,  
 That ye swiche menes make it to destroyen?  
 Which menes don no good, but ever anoyen,  
 I wote wel, clerkes wol fain as hem lest  
 By arguments, that all is for the best,  
 Though I ne can the causes nought yknow;  
 But thilke God that made the wind to blow, 11200  
 As kepe my lord, this is my conclusion:  
 To clerkes lete I all disputison:  
 But wolde God, that all thise rockes blake  
 Were sonken into helle for his sake,

Thise

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 135

Thise rockes flee min herte for the fere.

Thus wold she fay with many a pitous tere.

Hire frendes saw that it was no disport  
To romen by the see, but discomfort,  
And shape hem for to plaien somwher elles.

They leden hire by rivers and by welles, 11210

And eke in other places delitable;

They dancen and they play at ches and tables.

So on a day, right in the morwe tide,

Unto a gardin that was ther beside,

In which that they had made hir ordinance

Of vitaille, and of other purveance,

They gon and plaie hem all the longe day :

And this was on the fixte morwe of May,

Which May had peinted with his softe shoures

This gardin ful of leves and of floures : 11220

And craft of mannes hond so curiously

Arrayed had this gardin trewely,

That never was ther gardin of swiche pris,

But if it were the veray paradis.

The odour of floures, and the freshe sight,

Wold han ymaked any herte light

That ever was born, but if to gret fikenesse

Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse,

So ful it was of beautee and plesance.

And after dinner gonnen they to dance 11230

K 4

And



136 THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

And sing also, sauf Dorigene alone,  
Which made alway hire complaint and hire mone,  
For she ne saw him on the dance go,  
That was hire hufbond, and hire love also :  
But natheles she must a time abide,  
And with good hope let hire forwe slide.

Upon this dance, amonges other men,  
Danced a squier before Dorigen,  
That fresher was and jolier of array,  
As to my dome, than is the month of May. 11240  
He singeth, danceth, passing any man,  
That is or was fin that the world began ;  
Therwith he was, if men shuld him discrive,  
On of the beste faring men on live,  
Yong, strong, and vertuous, and riche, and wise,  
And wel beloved, and holden in gret prife.  
And shortly, if the soth I tellen shal,  
Unweting of this Dorigene at al,  
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,  
Which that ycleped was Aurelius, 11250  
Had loved hire best of any creature  
Two yere and more, as was his aventure ;  
But never dorst he tell hire his grevance,  
Withouten cup he dranke all his penance.  
He was dispeired, nothing dorst he say,  
Sauf in his songes somwhat wold he wray

His

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 137

His wo, as in a general complaining;  
 He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.  
 Of swiche matere made he many layes,  
 Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes; 11260  
 How that he dorste not his forwe telle,  
 But languisheth, as doth a furie in helle;  
 And die he must, he said, as did Ecco  
 For Narcissus, that dorst not tell hire wo.

In other maner than ye here me say,  
 Ne dorst he not to hire his wo bewray,  
 Sauf that paraventure somtime at dances,  
 Ther yonge folk kepen hir observances,  
 It may wel be he loked on hire face  
 In swiche a wise, as man that axeth grace, 11270  
 But nothing wiste she of his entent.  
 Natheles it happed, or they thennes went,  
 Because that he was hire neighebour,  
 And was a man of worship and honour,  
 And had yknowen him of time yore,  
 They fell in speche, and forth ay more and more  
 Unto his purpos drow Aurelius;  
 And whan he saw his time, he faide thus.  
 Madame, quod he, by God that this world made,  
 So that I wist it might your herte glade, 11280  
 I wold that day, that your Arviragus  
 Went over see, that I Aurelius

Had



138 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

Had went ther I shuld never come again;  
 For wel I wot my service is in vain,  
 My guerdon n'is but breſting of min herte.  
 Madame, rueth upon my peines ſmerte,  
 For with a word ye may me fleeen or ſave.  
 Here at your feet God wold that I were grave.  
 I ne have as now no leiſer more to ſey :  
 Have mercy, ſwete, or ye wol do me dey. 11290

She gan to loke upon Aurelius;  
 Is this your will (quod ſhe) and ſay ye thus?  
 Never erſt (quod ſhe) ne wiſt I what ye ment :  
 But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.  
 By thilke God that yaf me ſoule and liſ,  
 Ne ſhal I never ben an untrewē wif  
 In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit,  
 I wol ben his to whom that I am knit :  
 Take this for final answer as of me.  
 But after that in play thus ſaide ſhe. 11300

Aurelie, (quod ſhe) by high God above  
 Yet wol I granten you to ben your love,  
 (Sin I you ſee ſo pitouſly complaine)  
 Loke, what day that endelong Bretaigne  
 Ye remue all the rockes, ſton by ſton,  
 That they ne letten ſhip ne bote to gon,  
 I ſay, whan ye han made the coſt ſo clene  
 Of rockes, that ther n'is no ſton yſene,

Than

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 139

Than wol I love you best of any man,  
 Have here my trouth, in all that ever I can; 11310  
 For wel I wote that it shal never betide.  
 Let swiche folie out of your herte glide.  
 What deintee shuld a man have in his lif  
 For to go love another mannes wif,  
 That hath hire body whan that ever him liketh?

Aurelius ful often fore siketh;  
 Is ther non other grace in you? quod he.

No, by that lord, quod she, that maked me.  
 Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herd,  
 And with a forweful herte he thus answerd. 11320

Madame, quod he, this were an impossible.  
 Than moſte I die of ſoden deth horrible.  
 And with that word he turned him anon.

Tho come hire other frendes many on,  
 And in the alleyes romed up and doun,  
 And nothing wiſt of this concluſioun,  
 But ſodenly begonnen revel newe,  
 Til that the brighte ſonne had loſt his hewe,  
 For the orizont had reſt the ſonne his light;  
 (This is as much to ſayn as it was night) 11330

And home they gon in mirthe and in ſolas;  
 Sauſ only wrecche Aurelius, alas!  
 He to his hous is gon with forweful herte.  
 He ſaith, he may not from his deth aſterte.



140 THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

Him semeth, that he felt his herte cold.  
 Up to the heven his hondes gan he hold,  
 And on his knees bare he fet him down,  
 And in his raving said his orisoun.  
 For veray wo out of his wit he braide,  
 He n'iste what he spake, but thus he saide; 11340  
 With pitous herte his plaint hath he begonne  
 Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne,  
 He said; Apollo, God and governour  
 Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flour,  
 That yevest after thy declination  
 To eche of hem his time and his seson,  
 As that thin herbergh changeth low and hie;  
 Lord Phebus, cast thy merciabe eie  
 On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorne.  
 Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth ysworne 11350  
 Withouten gilt, but thy benignitee  
 Upon my dedly herte have som pitee.  
 For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you lest,  
 Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.  
 Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise  
 How that I may be holpe and in what wise.  
 Your blisful suster, Lucina the shene,  
 That of the see is chief goddesse and quene,  
 Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,  
 Yet emperice aboven him is she; 11360

Ye

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 141

Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hire desire  
 Is to be quiked and lighted of your fire,  
 For which she folweth you ful befily,  
 Right so the see desireth naturelly  
 To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse  
 Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.  
 Wherefore, lord Phebus, this is my request,  
 Do this miracle, or do min herte brest;  
 That now next at this opposition,  
 Which in the signe shal be of the Leon, 11370  
 As preyeth hire so gret a flood to bring,  
 That five fadome at the lest it overspring  
 The highest rock in Armorike Bretaigne,  
 And let this flood endure yeres twaine:  
 Than certes to my lady may I say,  
 Holdeth your heft, the rockes ben away.  
 Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,  
 Prey hire she go no faster cours than ye;  
 I say this, preyeth your suster that she go  
 No faster cours than ye thise yeres two: 11380  
 Than shal she ben even at ful alway,  
 And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.  
 And but she vouchesauf in swiche manere  
 To graunten me my foveraine lady dere,  
 Prey hire to sinken every rock adoun  
 Into hire owen derke regioun

Under



142 THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth in,  
Or nevermo shal I my lady win.

Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke.  
Lord Phebus, see the teres on my cheke, 11390  
And on my peine have som compassioun.  
And with that word, in forwe he fell adoun, ••  
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.  
His brother, which that knew of his penance,  
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.  
Dispeired in this turment and this thought  
Let I this woful creature lie,  
Chese he for me whether he wol live or die.

Arviragus with hele and gret honour  
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour) 11400  
Is comen home, and other worthy men :  
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,  
That hast thy lusty hufbond in thin armes,  
The freshe knight, the worthy man of armes,  
That loveth thee, as his owen hertes lif :  
Nothing list him to be imaginatif,  
If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,  
To hire of love ; he had of that no doute ;  
He not entendeth to no swiche matere,  
But danceth, justeth, and maketh mery chere. 11410  
And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwell,  
And of the fike Aurelius wol I tell.

In

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 143

In langour and in turment furious  
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,  
Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;  
Ne comfort in this time ne had he non,  
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.  
He knew of all this wo and all this werk;  
For to non other creature certain  
Of this matere he dorste no word fain; 11420  
Under his brest he bare it more secree,  
Than ever did Pamphilus for Galathee.  
His brest was hole withouten for to seen,  
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene,  
And wel ye knowe that of a furfanure  
In surgerie is perilous the cure,  
But men might touch the arwe or come therby.

His brother wepeth and waileth prively,  
Til at the last him fell in remembrance,  
That while he was at Orleauce in France, 11430  
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous  
To reden artes that ben curious,  
Seken in every halke and every herne  
Particuler sciencés for to lerne,  
He him remembred, that upon a day  
At Orleauce in studie a book he fay  
Of Magike naturel, which his felaw,  
That was that time a bachelor of law,



144 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

Al were he ther to lerne another craft,  
 Had prively upon his desk ylast ; 11440  
 Which book spake moche of operations  
 Touching the eight and twenty mansions  
 That longen to the Mone, and swiche folie  
 As in our dayes n'is not worth a flie :  
 For holy cherches feith, in our beleve,  
 Ne suffreth non illusion us to greve.  
 And whan this book was in his remembrance,  
 Anon for joye his herte gan to dance,  
 And to himself he saied prively ;  
 My brother shal be warished hastily : 11450  
 For I am fiker that ther be sciences,  
 By which men maken divers apparences,  
 Swiche as thise subtil tregetoures play.  
 For oft at festes have I wel herd say,  
 That tregetoures, within an halle large,  
 Have made come in a water and a barge,  
 And in the halle rowen up and down.  
 Somtime hath semed come a grim leoun,  
 And somtime floures spring as in a mede,  
 Somtime a vine, and grapes white and rede, 11460  
 Somtime a castel al of lime and ston,  
 And whan hem liketh voideth it anon :  
 Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.  
 Now than conclude I thus, if that I might

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 145

At Orleauce som olde felaw find,  
 That hath thise Mones mansions in mind,  
 Or other Magike naturel above,  
 He shuld wel make my brother have his love.  
 For with an apparence a clerk may make  
 To mannes fight, that all the rockes blake 11470  
 Of Bretaigne were yvoided everich on,  
 And shippes by the brinke comen and gon,  
 And in swiche forme endure a day or two :  
 Than were my brother warished of his wo,  
 Than must she nedes holden hire beheft,  
 Or elles he shal shame hire at the left.

What shuld I make a lenger tale of this ?  
 Unto his brothers bed he comen is,  
 And swiche comfort he yaf him, for to gon  
 To Orleauce, that he up stert anon, 11480  
 And on his way forthward than is he fare,  
 In hope for to ben lissed of his care.

Whan they were come almost to that citee,  
 But if it were a two furlong or three,  
 A yonge clerk roming by himself they mette,  
 Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.  
 And after that he sayd a wonder thing ;  
 I know, quod he, the cause of your coming :  
 And or they forther any foote went,  
 He told hem all that was in hir entent. 11490



146 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

This Breton clerk him axed of felawes,  
The which he had yknowen in olde dawes,  
And he answered him that they dede were,  
For which he wept ful often many a tere.

Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,  
And forth with this magicien is gon  
Home to his hous, and made hem wel at ese :  
Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem plesse.  
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,  
Aurelius in his lif saw never non.

11500

He shewed him, or they went to soupere,  
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde dere.  
Ther saw he hartes with hir hornes hie,  
The gretest that were ever seen with eie.  
He saw of hem an hundred slain with houndes,  
And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.  
He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,  
Thise fauconers upon a faire rivere,  
That with hir haukes han the heron slain.

Tho saw he knightes justen in a plain. 11510  
And after this he did him swiche plesance,  
That he him shewed his lady on a dance,  
On which himselven danced, as him thought.  
And whan this maister, that this magike wrought,  
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,  
And farewel, al the revel is ago.

And

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 147

And yet remued they never out of the hous,  
While they saw all thise fightes merveillous;  
But in his studie, ther his bookes be,  
They faten still, and no wight but they three.

To him this maister called his squier, 11520  
And sayd him thus, may we go to souper?  
Almost an houre it is, I undertake,  
Sin I you bade our souper for to make,  
Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me  
Into my studie, ther my bookes be.

Sire, quod this squier, whan it liketh you,  
It is al redy, though ye wol right now.

Go we than soupe, quod he, as for the best, '  
Thise amorous folk somtime moste han rest. 11530

At after souper fell they in trettee  
What summe shuld this maisters guerdon be,  
To remue all the rockes of Bretaigne,  
And eke from Gerounde to the mouth of Saine.

He made it strange, and swore, to God him save,  
Lesse than a thousand pound he wold not have,  
Ne gladly for that summe he wold not gon.

Aurelius with blisful herte anon  
Answered thus; fie on a thousand pound:  
This wide world, which that men sayn is round,  
I wold it yeve, if I were lord of it. 11541

This bargaine is ful drive, for we ben knit;



148 THE FRANKLEINES TALE

Ye shul be paied trewely by my trouth.  
 But loketh, for non negligence or slouth,  
 Ye tarie us here no lenger than to morwe.  
 Nay, quod this clerk, have here my faith to borwe.

To bed is gon Aurelius whan him left,  
 And wel nigh all that night he had his rest,  
 What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,  
 His woful herte of penance had a lisse. 11550

Upon the morwe whan that it was day,  
 To Bretaigne token they the righte way,  
 Aurelie, and this magicien him beside,  
 And ben descended ther they wold abide :  
 And this was, as the bookes me remember,  
 The colde frosty seson of December.

Phebus waxe old, and hewed like laton,  
 That in his hote declination  
 Shone as the burned gold, with stremes bright ;  
 But now in Capricorne adoun he light, 11560  
 Wher as he shone ful pale, I dare wel sain.  
 The bitter froste/ with the fleet and rain  
 Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.  
 Janus sit by the fire with double berd,  
 And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine :  
 Beforn him stant braune of the tusked swine,  
 And *nowel* crieth every lusty man.

Aurelius in all that ever he can,

Doth

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 149

Doth to his maister chere and reverence,  
And praieth him to don his diligence 11570  
To bringen him out of his peines smerte,  
Or with a fwerd that he wold slit his herte.

This sotil clerk swiche routh hath on this man,  
That night and day he spedeth him, that he oan,  
To wait a time of his conclusion;  
This is to fayn, to make illusion,  
By swiche an apparence or joglerie,  
(I can no termes of Astrologie)  
That she and every wight shuld wene and say,  
That of Bretaigne the rockes were away, 11580  
Or elles they were sonken under ground.

So at the last he hath his time yfound  
To make his japes and his wretchednesse  
Of swiche a superstitious cursednesse.  
His tables Toletanes forth he brought  
Ful wel corrected, that ther lacked nought,  
Nother his collect, ne his expans yeres,  
Nother his rotes, ne his other geres,  
As ben his centres, and his argumentes,  
And his proportionel convenientes 11590

For his equations in every thing.  
And by his eighte speres in his werking,  
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove  
Fro the hed of thilke fix Aries above,



150 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

That in the ninthe spere considered is,  
 Ful sotilly he calculed all this.  
 Whan he had found his firste mansion,  
 He knew the remenant by proportion;  
 And knew the rising of his Mone wel,  
 And in whos face, and terme, and every del;  
 And knew ful wel the mones mansion 11601  
 Accordant to his operation;  
 And knew also his other observances,  
 For swiche illusions and swiche meschances,  
 As hethen folk used in thilke daies.  
 For which no lenger maketh he delaies,  
 But thurgh his magike, for a day or tway,  
 It seemed all the rockes were away.

Aurelius, which that despeired is,  
 Whether he shal han his love, or fare amis, 11610  
 Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:  
 And whan he knew that ther was non obstacle,  
 That voided were thise rockes everich on,  
 Doun to his maisters feet he fell anon,  
 And sayd; I woful wretch Aurelius,  
 Thanke you, my lord, and lady min Venus,  
 That me han holpen fro my cares cold.  
 And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,  
 Theras he knew he shuld his lady see.  
 And whan he saw his time, anon right he 11620  
 With

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 151

With dredful herte and with ful humble chere  
Salued hath his foveraine lady dere.

My rightful lady, quod this woful man,  
Whom I most drede, and love, as I best can,  
And lothest were of all this world displese,  
N'ere it that I for you have swiche disese,  
That I must die here at your foot anon,  
Nought wold I tell how me is wo begon,  
But certes other must I die or plaine;  
Ye fle me gilteles for veray peine. 11630  
But of my deth though that ye han no routh,  
Aviseþ you, or that ye breke your trouth;  
Repenteth you for thilke God above,  
Or ye me fle, because that I you love,  
For, madame, wel ye wote what ye have hight;  
Not that I challenge any thing of right  
Of you, my foveraine lady, but of grace;  
But in a gardin yond, in swiche a place,  
Ye wote right wel what ye behighten me,  
And in myn hond your trouthe plighten ye, 11640  
To love me best; God wote ye saied so,  
Although that I unworthy be therto;  
Madame, I speke it for the honour of you,  
More than to save my hertes lif right now;  
I have don so as ye commanded me,  
And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go see.



152 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

Doth as you list, have your behest in mind,  
For quick or ded, right ther ye shul me find :  
In you lith all to do me live or dey,  
But wel I wote the rockes ben away. 11659

He taketh his leve, and she astonied stood ;  
In all hire face n'as o drope of blood :  
She wened never han come in swiche a trappe.

Alas ! quod she, that ever this shuld happe !  
For wend I never by possibilittee,  
That swiche a monstre or mervaille might be :  
It is again the processe of nature.

And home she goth a forweful creature,  
For veray fere unnethes may she go.  
She wepeth, waileth all a day or two, 11660  
And swouneth, that it routhe was to see :  
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,  
For out of toun was gon Arviragus.  
But to hireself she spake, and saied thus,  
With face pale, and with ful fory chere,  
In hire complaint, as ye shul after here.

Alas ! quod she, on thee, fortune, I plain,  
That unware hast me wrapped in thy chain :  
Fro which to escapen, wote I no foccour,  
Sauf only deth, or elles dishonour : 11670  
On of thise two behoveth me to chese.  
But natheles, yet had I lever lese

My

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 153

My lif, than of my body have a shame,  
 Or know myselven false, or lese my name;  
 And with my deth I may be quit ywis.  
 Hath ther not many a noble wif or this,  
 And many a maid yflaine hireself, alas!  
 Rather than with hire body don trespas?  
 Yes certes; lo, thise stories bere witnesse.

Whan thirty tyrants ful of cursednesse 11680  
 Had slain Phidon in Athens at the fest,  
 They commanded his doughtren for to arrest,  
 And bringen hem beforne hem in despit  
 Al naked, to fulfill hir foule delit;  
 And in hir fadres blood they made hem dance  
 Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschance,  
 For which thise woful maidens ful of drede,  
 Rather than they wold lese hir maidenhede,  
 They prively ben ftert into a welle,  
 And dreint hemselven, as the bookes telle. 11690

They of Messene let enquire and seke  
 Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,  
 On which they wolden don hir lecherie:  
 But ther was non of all that compaignie  
 That she n'as flaine, and with a glad entent  
 Chees rather for to dien, than assent  
 To ben oppressed of hire maidenhede.  
 Why shuld I than to dien ben in drede?

Le



154 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

Lo eke the tyrant Aristoclides,  
 That loved a maid hight Stimphalides, 11700  
 Whan that hire father slaine was on a night,  
 Unto Dianas temple goth she right,  
 And hente the image in hire handes two,  
 Fro which image wold she never go,  
 No wight hire handes might of it arrace,  
 Til she was slaine right in the selve place.

Now fin that maidens hadden swiche despit  
 To be defouled with mannes foule delit,  
 Wel ought a wif rather hireselfen fle,  
 Than be defouled, as it thinketh me. 11710

What shal I sayn of Hasdrubales wif,  
 That at Cartage beraft hireself hire lif?  
 For whan she saw that Romans wan the toun,  
 She toke hire children all, and skipt adoun  
 Into the fire, and chees rather to die,  
 Than any Romain did hire vilanie,

Hath not Lucrece yslaine hireself, alas!  
 At Rome, whan that she oppressed was  
 Of Tarquine? for hire thought it was a shame  
 To liven, whan she hadde lost hire name. 11720

The seven maidens of Milefie also  
 Han slaine hemself for veray drede and wo,  
 Rather than folk of Gaule hem shuld oppresse.  
 Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse.

Coude

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 155

Coude I now tell as touching this matere.

Whan Abradate was slain, his wif so dere  
Hireselven flow, and let hire blood to glide  
In Abradates woundes, depe and wide,  
And sayd, my body at the leste way  
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may. 11730

What shuld I mo ensamples hereof sain?  
Sin that so many han hemselven slain  
Wel rather than they wold defouled be,  
I wol conclude that it is bet for me  
To fle myself than be defouled thus.

I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,  
Or elles fle myself in some manere,  
As did Demotiones doughter dere,  
Because she wolde not defouled be.

O Sedasus, it is ful gret pitee 11740  
To reden how thy doughtren died, alas!  
That flowe hemselven for swiche maner cas.

As gret a pitee was it or wel more,  
The Theban maiden, that for Nichanore  
Hireselven flow, right for swiche manere wo,  
Another Theban mayden did right so,  
For on of Macedoine, had hire oppressed,  
She with hire deth hire maidenhed redressed.

What shal I sain of Nicerates wif,  
That for swiche cas beraft hireself hire lif? 11750  
How



256 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

How trewe was eke to Alcibiades  
His love, that for to dien rather chees,  
Than for to suffre his body unburied be?

Lo, which a wif was Alceste eke? (quod she)  
What sayth Homere of good Penelope?  
All Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.

Parde of Laodomia is written thus,  
That whan at Troye was flain Prothesilaus,  
No lenger wolde she live after his day.

The same of noble Portia tell I may; 11760  
Withouten Brutus coude she not live,  
To whom she had all hol hire herte yeve,

The parfit wifhood of Artemisie  
Honoured is thurghout all Barbarie.

O Teuta quenè, thy wifly chastitee  
To alle wives may a mirrour be.

Thus plained Dorigene a day or twey,  
Purposing ever that she wolde dey;  
But natheles upon the thridde night  
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight, 11770  
And axed hire why that she weep so fore:  
And she gan wepen ever lenger the more.

Alas, quod she, that ever I was yborne!  
Thus have I said, (quod she) thus have I sworne.  
And told him all, as ye have herd before:  
It nedeth not reherse it you no more.

This

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 157

This husband with glad chere in frendly wise  
Answerd and sayd, as I shal you devise.  
Is ther ought elles, Dorigene, but this?

Nay, nay, quod she, God helpe me so, as wis  
This is to much, and it were Goddes will. 1178

Ye, wif, quod he, let slepen that is still,  
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.  
Ye shal your trouthe holden by my fay.  
For God so wisly have mercy on me,  
I had wel lever stiked for to be,  
For veray love which that I to you have,  
But if ye shuld your trouthe kepe and save.  
Trowth is the hiest thing that man may kepe.  
But with that word he braut anon to wepe, 1179

And sayd; I you forbode on peine of deth,  
That never while you lasteth lif or breth,  
To no wight tell ye this misaventure.  
As I may best I wol my wo endure.  
Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,  
That folk of you may demen harme or gesse.  
And forth he cleped a squier and a maid.  
Goth forth anon with Dorigene, he said,  
And bringeth hire to swiche a place anon.  
They take hir leve, and on hir way they gon: 1180  
But they ne wisten why she thider went,  
She n'olde no wight tellen hire entent.

This



158 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

This squier, which that highte Aurelius,  
 On Dorigene that was so amorous,  
 Of aventure happed hire to mete  
 Amid the toun, right in the quikkeſt ſtrete,  
 As ſhe was boun to go the way forthright  
 Toward the gardin, ther as ſhe had hight.  
 And he was to the gardinward alſo;  
 For wel he ſpied whan ſhe wolde go 11810  
 Out of hire hous, to any maner place!  
 But thus they met of aventure or grace,  
 And he ſalueth hire with glad entent,  
 And axeth of hire whiderward ſhe went.

And ſhe answered, half as ſhe were mad,  
 Unto the gardin, as myn huſbond bad,  
 My trouthe for to hold, alas! alas!

Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,  
 And in his herte had gret compaſſion  
 Of hire, and of hire lamentation, 11820  
 And of Arviragus the worthy knight,  
 That bad hire holden all that ſhe had hight,  
 So loth him was his wif ſhuld breke hire trouthe.  
 And in his herte he caught of it gret routhe,  
 Conſidering the beſt on every ſide,  
 That fro his luſt yet were him lever abide,  
 Than do ſo high a cherliſh wretchedneſſe  
 Ageins fraunchiſe, and alle gentilleſſe;

For

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 159

For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.

Madame, say to your lord Arviragus, 11830  
That sin I see the grete gentilleſſe  
Of him, and eke I ſee wel your diſtreſſe, [routhe)  
That him were lever have ſhame (and that were  
Than ye to me ſhuld breken thus your trouthe,  
I hadde wel lever ever to ſuffren wo,  
Than to depart the love betwix you two.  
I you releſe, madame, into your hond  
Quit every ſeurement and every bond,  
That ye han made to me, as herebeforne,  
Sin thilke time that ye were yborne. 11840  
Have here my trouthe, I ſhal you never repreve  
Of no beheſt, and here I take my leve,  
As of the treweſt and the beſte wiſ,  
That ever yet I knew in all my liſ.  
But every wiſ beware of hire beheſt;  
On Dorigene remembreth at the leſt.  
Thus can a ſquier don a gentil dede,  
As wel as can a knight, withouten drede.

She thanketh him upon hire knees bare,  
And home unto hire huſbond is ſhe fare, 11850  
And told him all, as ye han herd me ſayd:  
And, truſteth me, he was ſo wel apayd,  
That it were impoſſible me to write.

What ſhuld I lenger of this caſ endite?

Arviragus



160 THE FRANKLEINES TALE

Arviragus and Dorigene his wif  
 In foveraine blisse leden forth hir lif,  
 Never eft ne was ther anger hem betwene;  
 He cherished hire as though she were a quene,  
 And she was to him trewe for evermore:  
 Of thise two folk ye get of me no more. 11860

Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorne,  
 Curseth the time, that ever he was borne.  
 Alas! quod he, alas that I behight  
 Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight  
 Unto this philosophre! how shal I do?  
 I see no more, but that I am fordo.  
 Min heritage mote I nedes sell,  
 And ben a begger, here I n'ill not dwell,  
 And shamen all my kinrede in this place,  
 But I of him may geten better grace. 11870  
 But natheles I wol of him assay

At certain daies yere by yere to pay,  
 And thanke him of his grete curtesie.  
 My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lie.

With herte fore he goth unto his cofre,  
 And broughte gold unto this philosophre,  
 The value of five hundred pound I gesse,  
 And him besecheth of his gentilleffe  
 To graunt him daies of the remenaunt,  
 And sayde; maister, I dare wel make avaunt, 11880  
 I failed

THE FRANKLEINES TALE. 161

I failed never of my trouthe as yet.  
 For sikerly my dette shal be quit  
 Towardes you, how so that ever I fare  
 To gon a begging in my kirtle bare :  
 But wold ye vouchen sauf upon seurtee  
 Two yere or three for to respiten me,  
 Than were I wel, for elles mote I sell  
 Min heritage, ther is no more to tell:

This Philosophre sobrely answerd,  
 And saied thus, whan he thise wordes herd; 11898  
 Have I not holden covenant to thee?

Yes certes, wel and trewely, quod he.  
 Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?

No, no, quod he, and forwefully he siketh:  
 What was the cause? tell me if thou can.

Aurelius his tale anon began,  
 And told him all as ye han herd before,  
 It nedeth not reherse it any more.  
 He sayd, Arviragus of gentillesse  
 Had lever die in forwe and in distresse; 11900  
 Than that his wif were of hire trouthe fals.  
 The forwe of Dorigene he told him als,  
 How loth hire was to ben a wicked wif,  
 And that she lever had lost that day hire lif;  
 And that her trouth she swore thurgh innocence;  
 She never erst hadde herd speke of apparence:



162 THE FRANKLEINES TALE.

That made me han of hire so gret pitee,  
And right as freely as he sent hire to me,  
As freely sent I hire to him again :  
This is all and som, ther n'is no more to fain. 11910

The Philosophre answerd ; leve brother,  
Everich of you did gentilly to other :  
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,  
But God forbede for his blisful might,  
But if a clerk coud don a gentil dede  
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.

Sire, I relese thee thy thousand pound,  
As thou right now were crope out of the ground,  
Ne never er now ne haddeft knowen me.  
For, fire, I wol not take a peny of thee 11920  
For all my craft, ne nought for my travaille :  
Thou hast ypaied wel for my vitaille.  
It is ynough, and farewel, have good day.  
And toke his hors, and forth he goth his way.

Lordings, this question wold I axen now,  
Which was the moste free, as thinketh you ?  
Now telleth me, or that ye further wende.  
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

YE, let that passen, quod oure Hoste, as now.  
Sire Doctour of Phyfike, I prey you, 11930  
Tell

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE. 163

Tell us a tale of som honest matere.

It shal be don, if that ye wol it here,  
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.  
Now, good men, quod he, herkeneth everich on.

THE DOCTOURES TALE.

THER was, as telleth Titus Livius,  
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,  
Fulfilled of honour and worthinesse,  
And strong of frendes, and of gret richesse.

This knight a doughter hadde by his wif.  
No children had he mo in all his lif. 11940  
Faure was this maid in excellent beautee  
Aboven every wight that man may see :  
For nature hath with soveraine diligence  
Yformed hire in so gret excellence,  
As though she wolde sayn, lo, I nature,  
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,  
Whan that me list ; who can me contrefete ?  
Pigmalion ? not, though he ay forge and bete,  
Or grave, or peinte : for I dare wel sain,  
Apelles, Xeuxis, shulden werche in vain, 11950  
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete,  
If they presumed me to contrefete.  
For he that is the former principal,  
Hath maked me his vicaire general

M 2

To



164 THE DOCTOURES TALE.

To forme and peinten erthly creatures  
 Right as me list, and eche thing in my cure is  
 Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.  
 And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;  
 My lord and I ben ful of on accord.  
 I made hire to the worship of my lord; 11960  
 So do I all min other creatures,  
 What colour that they han, or what figures.  
 Thus semeth me that nature wolde say.

This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,  
 In which that nature hadde swiche delit.  
 For right as she can peint a lily whit  
 And red a rose, right with swiche peinture  
 She peinted hath this noble creature  
 Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,  
 Wheras by right swiche colours shulden be: 11970  
 And Phebus died hath hire tressles grete,  
 Like to the stremes of his burned hete.  
 And if that excellent were hire beautee,  
 A thousand fold more vertuous was she.  
 In hire ne lacked no condition,  
 That is to preise, as by discretion.  
 As wel in goft as body, chaste was she:  
 For which she floured in virginitee,  
 With all humilitee and abstinence,  
 With all attemperance and patience, 11980

With

THE DOCTOURES TALE. 165

With mesure eke, of bering and array.  
 Discrete she was in answering alway,  
 Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I fain,  
 Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,  
 No contrefeted termes hadde she  
 To semen wise; but after hire degree  
 She spake, and all hire wordes more and lesse  
 Souning in vertue and in gentillesse.  
 Shamefast she was in maidens shamefastnesse,  
 Constant in herte, and ever in besinesse 11990  
 To drive hire out of idel flogardie:  
 Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maistrie.  
 For wine and youthe don Venus encrese,  
 As men in fire wol casten oile and grese.  
 And of hire owen vertue unconstreined,  
 She hath hireself ful often fike yfeined,  
 For that she wolde fleen the compaignie,  
 Wher likely was to treten of folie,  
 As is at festes, at revels, and at dances,  
 That ben occasions of daliances. 12000  
 Swiche thinges maken children for to be  
 To sone ripe and bold, as men may see,  
 Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;  
 For al to sone may she lernen lore  
 Of boldnesse, whan she woxen is a wif.  
 And ye maistresses in your olde lif,

M 3

That



That lordes doughters han in governance,  
 Ne taketh of my wordes displefance :  
 Thinketh that ye ben set in governinges  
 Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges, 12010  
 Other for ye han kept your honestee,  
 Or elles for ye han fallen in freelte, e  
 And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,  
 And han forsaken fully swiche meschance  
 For evermo : therefore for Cristes sake  
 To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne flake.

A theef of venifon, that hath forlaft  
 His likerousnesse, and all his olde craft,  
 Can kepe a forest best of any man :  
 Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can. 12020  
 Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,  
 Lest ye be damned for your wikke entent,  
 For who so doth, a traytour is certain :  
 And taketh kepe of that I shal you fain ;  
 Of alle treson soveraine pestilence  
 Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.

Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,  
 Though ye han children, be it on or mo,  
 Your is the charge of all hir surveance,  
 While that they ben under your governance. 12030  
 Beth ware, that by ensample of your living,  
 Or by your negligence in chastising,

That

THE DOCTOURES TALE. 167

That they ne perish : for I dare wel saye,  
 If that they don, ye shul it dere abeye.  
 Under a shepherd soft and negligent,  
 The wolf hath many a shepe and lamb to-rent.

Sufficeth this ensample now as here,  
 For I mote turne agen to my matere.

This maid, of which I tell my tale expresse,  
 She kept hireself, hire neded no maistresse ; 12040  
 For in hire living maidens mighten rede,  
 As in a book, every good word and dede,  
 That longeth to a maiden vertuous :  
 She was so prudent and so bounteous.  
 For which the fame out sprong on every side  
 Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide :  
 That thurgh the lond they preised hire ech one,  
 That loved vertue, sauf envie alone,  
 That fory is of other mannes wele,  
 And glad is of his sorwe and his unhele. 12050  
 The doctour maketh this descriptioun.

This maiden on a day went in the toun  
 Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,  
 As is of yonge maidens the manere.

Now was ther than a justice in that toun,  
 That governour was of that regioun :  
 And so befell, this juge his eyen cast  
 Upon this maid, avising hire ful fast,



168 THE DOCTOURES TALE.

As she came forth by ther this juge stood;  
 Anon his herte changed and his mood, 12069  
 So was he caught with beautee of this maid,  
 And to himself ful prively he said,  
 This maiden shal be min for any man.

Anon the fend into his herte ran,  
 And taught him sodenly, that he by sleight  
 This maiden to his purpos winnen might.  
 For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,  
 Him thought he was not able for to spede;  
 For she was strong of frendes, and eke she  
 Confermed was in swiche soveraine bountee, 12070  
 That wel he wist he might hire never winne,  
 As for to make hire with hire body sinne.  
 For which with gret deliberatioun  
 He sent after a cherl was in the toun,  
 The which he knew for fotil and for bold.  
 This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told  
 In secree wise, and made him to ensue,  
 He shulde tell it to no creature,  
 And if he did, he shulde lese his hede.

And whan assented was this cursed rede, 12080  
 Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,  
 And yaf him yestes precious and dere.

Whan shapen was all hir conspiracie  
 Fro point to point, how that his lecherie

Parformed

THE DOCTOURES TALE. 169

Parformed shulde be ful sotilly,  
 As ye shul here it after openly,  
 Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.  
 This false juge, that highte Appius,  
 (So was his name, for it is no fable,  
 But knowen for an historial thing notable ; 12090  
 The sentence of it soth is out of doute)  
 This false juge goth now fast aboute  
 To hasten his delit all that he may.  
 And so befell, sone after on a day  
 This false juge, as telleth us the storie,  
 As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,  
 And yaf his domes upon sondry cas ;  
 This false cherl came forth a ful gret pas,  
 And faide ; lord, if that it be your will,  
 As doth me right upon this pitous bill, 12100  
 In which I plaine upon Virginius.  
 And if that he wol sayn it is not thus,  
 I wol it preve, and finden good witnesse,  
 That soth is that my bille wol expresse.

The juge answerd, of this in his absence  
 I may not yeve diffinitif sentence.  
 Let don him call, and I wol gladly here ;  
 Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.

Virginius came to wete the juges will,  
 And right anon was red this cursed bill ; 12110  
 The



170 THE DOCTOURES TALE.

The sentence of it was as ye shul here.

To you, my lord sire Appius so dere,  
Sheweth your poure servant Claudius,  
How that a knight called Virginus,  
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,  
Holdeth, expresse agein the will of me,  
My servant, which that is my thral by right,  
Which from min hous was stolen on a night  
While that she was ful yong, I wol it preve  
By witnesse, lord, so that it you not greve; 12120  
She n'is his doughter nought, what so he say.  
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;  
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.  
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.

Virginus gan upon the cherl behold;  
But hastily, er he his tale told,  
And wold han preved it, as shuld a knight,  
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,  
That all was false, that said his adversary,  
This cursed juge wolde nothing tary, 12130  
Ne here a word more of Virginus,  
But yave his jugement, and saide thus.

I deme anon this cherl his servant have.  
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hire save.  
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.  
The cherl shal have his thral; thus I award.

And

THE DOCTOURES TALE. 171

And whan this worthy knight Virginius,  
Thurgh sentence of this iustice Appius,  
Muste by force his dere doughter yeven  
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven, 12140  
He goth him home, and set him in his hall,  
And let anon his dere doughter call;  
And with a face ded as ashen cold,  
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,  
With fadres pitee stiking thurgh his herte,  
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.

Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,  
Ther ben two waies, other deth or shame,  
That thou must suffre, alas that I was bore!  
For never thou deservedest wherfore 12150  
To dien with a swerd or with a knif.  
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,  
Which I have fostred up with swiche plesance,  
That thou were never out of my remembrance;  
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,  
And in my lif my laste joye also,  
O gemme of chastitee, in patience  
Take thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;  
For love and not for hate thou must be ded,  
My pitous hond must smiten of thin hed. 12160  
Alas that ever Appius thee say!  
Thus hath he falsely juged thee to-day.

And



172 THE DOCTOURES TALE.

And told hire all the cas, as ye before  
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.

O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.  
And with that word she both hire armes laid  
About his necke, as she was wont to do,  
(The teres braft out of hire eyen two,)  
And said, O goode father, shal I die?  
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie? 12170

No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.  
Than yeve me leiser, father min, quod she,  
My deth for to complaine a litel space;  
For parde Jepte yave his doughter grace  
For to complaine, or he hire flow, alas!  
And God it wot, nothing was hire trespas,  
But for she ran hire father first to see,  
To welcome him with gret solempnitee.  
And with that word she fell aswoun anon,  
And after, whan hire fwouning was agon, 12180  
She riseth up, and to hire father said:  
Blessed be God, that I shal die a maid.  
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a shame.  
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.  
And with that word she praied him ful oft,  
That with his swerd he wolde smite hire soft;  
And with that word, aswoun again she fell.  
Hire father, with ful sorweful herte and will,

Hire

THE DOCTOURES TALE. 173

Hire hed of smote, and by the top it hent,  
And to the juge he gan it to present, 12190  
As he sat yet in dome in consistorie.

And whan the juge it saw, as faith the storie,  
He bad to take him, and anhang him fast.  
But right anon a thousand peple in thraſt  
To ſave the knight, for routh and for pitee,  
For knowen was the falſe iniquitee.

The peple anon had ſuſpect in this thing  
By maner of the cherles chalenging,  
That it was by the aſſent of Appius;  
They wiſten wel that he was lecherous. 12200  
For which unto this Appius they gon,  
And caſte him in a priſon right anon,  
Wheras he ſlow himſelf: and Claudius,  
That ſervant was unto this Appius,  
Was demed for to hange upon a tree;  
But that Virginius of his pitee  
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,  
And elles certes had he ben begiled:  
The remenant were anhangd, more and leſſe,  
That were conſentant of this curſedneſſe. 12210

Here men may ſee how fin hath his merite:  
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol ſmite  
In no degree, ne in which maner wiſe  
The worme of conſcience may agriſe



174 THE DOCTOURES TALE.

Of wicked lif, though it so privee be,  
That no man wote therof, fauf God and he :  
For be he lewed man or elles lered,  
He n'ot how sone that he shal ben afered.  
Therefore I rede you this conseil take,  
Forfaketh finne, or finne you forsake. 12220

THE PARDONERES PROLOGUE.

OUR Hoste gan to swere as he were wood ;  
Harow ! (quod he) by nailes and by blood,  
This was a false cherl, and a false justice.  
As shameful deth, as herte can devise,  
Come to this juges and hir advocas.  
Algate this fely maide is flain, alas !  
Alas ! to dere abought she hire beautee.  
Wherfore I say, that al day man may see,  
That yestes of fortune and of nature  
Ben cause of deth to many a creature. 12230  
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dare wel sain ;  
Alas ! so pitoufly as she was flain.  
Of bothe yestes, that I speke of now,  
Men han ful often more for harm than prow.  
But trewely, min owen maister dere,  
This was a pitous tale for to here :  
But natheles, passe over, is no force.  
I pray to God so save thy gentil corps,

And

THE PARDONERES PROLOGUE. 175

And eke thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,  
 Thin ypocras, and eke thy galianes, 12240  
 And every boist ful of thy letuarie,  
 God bleffe hem and our lady Seinte Marie.  
 So mote I the, thou art a propre man,  
 And like a prelat by Seint Ronian;  
 Said I not wel? I cannot speke in terme;  
 But wel I wot, thou dost min herte to erme,  
 That I have almost caught a cardiacle:  
 By *corpus domini* but I have triacle,  
 Or elles a draught of moist and corny ale,  
 Or but I here anon a mery tale, 12250  
 Myn herte is lost for pitee of this maid.

Thou *bel amy*, thou pardoner, he said,  
 Tel us som mirth of japes right anon.

It shal be don, quod he, by Seint Ronion.  
 But first (quod he) here at this ale-stake  
 I wol both drinke, and biten on a cake.  
 But right anon thise gentiles gan to crie;

Nay, let him tell us of no ribaudrie.  
 Tell us som moral thing, that we mow here,  
 Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here. 12260  
 I graunte ywis, quod he, but I must thinke  
 Upon som honest thing, while that I drinke.

THE PARDONERES TALE.

LORDINGS, quod he, in chirche whan I preche,  
 I peine me to have an hautein speche,

And



176 THE PARDONERES TALE:

And ring it out, as round as goth a bell;  
For I can all by rote that I tell.  
My teme is alway on, and ever was;

*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*

First I pronounce whennes that I come,  
And than my bulles shew I all and some: 12278

Our liege lordes sele on my patente,  
That shew I first my body to warrente,  
That no man be so bold, ne preeft ne clerk,  
Me to disturbe of Cristes holy werk.

And after that than tell I forth my tales:

Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,

Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe,

And in Latin I speke a wordes fewe,

To saffron with my predication,

And for to ftere men to devotion. 12280

Than shew I forth my longe cristal stoncs,

Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones,

Relikes they ben, as wenen they echon:

Than have I in laton a shulder bone,  
Which that was of an holy iewes shepe:

Good men, say I, take of my wordes kepe:

If that this bone be washe in any well,

If cow, or calf, or shepe, or oxe swell,

That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,

Take water of that well, and wash his tonge,

I

And

THE PARDONERES TALE. 177

And it is hole anon : and forthermore  
Of pockes, and of scab, and every fore  
Shal every shepe be hole, that of this well  
Drinketh a draught ; take kepe of that I tell.

If that the good man, that the bestes oweth,  
Wol every weke, er that the cok him croweth,  
Fasting ydrinken of this well a draught,  
As thilke holy Jew our eldres taught,  
His bestes and his store shal multiplie.

And, fires, also it heleth jalousie. 12300  
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,  
Let maken with this water his potage,  
And never shal he more his wif mistrust,  
Though he the soth of hire defaute wist ;  
Al had she taken preeftes two or three.

Here is a mitaine eke, that ye may see :  
He that his hand wol put in this mitaine,  
He shal have multiplying of his graine,  
Whan he hath sowed, be it whete or otes,  
So that he offer pens or elles grotes. 12310

And, men and women, o thing warne I you :  
If any wight be in this chirche now,  
That hath don sinne horrible, so that he  
Dare not for shame of it yshriven be :  
Or any woman, be she yong or old,  
That hath ymade hire hufbond cokewold,



178 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Swiche folk shul han no power ne no grace  
To offer to my relikes in this place.  
And who so findeth him out of swiche blame,  
He wol come up and offer in Goddes name, 12320  
And I affoyle him by the auctoritee,  
Which that by bulle ygranted was to me.

By this gaude have I wonnen yere by yere  
An hundred mark, sin I was pardonere.  
I stonde like a clerk in my pulpet,  
And whan the lewed peple is down yset,  
I preche so as ye han herd before,  
And tell an hundred false japes more.  
Than peine I me to stretchen forth my necke,  
And est and west upon the peple I becke, 12330  
As doth a dove, sitting upon a berne :  
Myn hondes and my tonge gon so yerne,  
That it is joye to see my besynesse.  
Of avarice and of swiche cursednesse  
Is all my preching, for to make hem free  
To yeve hir pens, and namely unto me.  
For min entente is not but for to winne,  
And nothing for correction of sinne.  
I recke never whan that they be beried,  
Though that hir soules gon a blake beried. 12340

For certes many a predication  
Cometh oft time of evil entention ;

Som

THE PARDONERES TALE. 179

Som for plesance of folk, and flaterie,  
 To ben avanced by hypocrisie;  
 And som for vaine glorie, and som for hate;  
 For whan I dare non other wayes debate,  
 Than wol I sting him with my tonge sinerte  
 In preching, so that he shal not asterte  
 To ben defamed falsely, if that he  
 Hath trespassed to my brethren or to me. 12350

For though I telle not his propre name,  
 Men shal wel knownen that it is the same  
 By signes, and by other circumstances.  
 Thus quite I folk, that don us displeasures:  
 Thus spit I out my venime under hewe  
 Of holinesse, to seme holy and trewe.  
 But shortly min entente I wol devise,  
 I preche of nothing but for covetise.  
 Therfore my teme is yet, and ever was,  
*Radix malorum est cupiditas.* 12360

Thus can I preche again the same vice  
 Which that I use, and that is avarice.  
 But though myself be guilty in that sinne,  
 Yet can I maken other folk to twinne  
 From avarice, and fore hem to repente.  
 But that is not my principal entente;  
 I preche nothing but for covetise.  
 Of this matere it ought ynough suffice.



180 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Than tell I hem ensamples many on  
Of olde stories longe time agon. 1237●

For lewed peple loven tales olde ;  
Swhiche thinges can they wel report and holde.  
What? trowen ye, that whiles I may preche  
And winnen gold and silver for I teche,  
That I wol live in poverte wilfully?

Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.  
For I wol preche and beg in sondry londes,  
I wol not do no labour with min hondes,  
Ne make baskettes for to live therby,  
Because I wol not beggen idelly. 1238●

I wol non of the apostles contrefete :  
I wol have money, wolles, chese, and whete,  
Al were it yeven of the pourest page,  
Or of the pourest widewe in a village :  
Al shulde hire children sterven for famine.  
Nay, I wol drinke the licour of the vine,  
And have a joly wenche in every toun.

But herkeneth, lordings, in conclusioun,  
Your liking is that I shal tell a tale.  
Now I have dronke a draught of corny ale, 1239●  
By God I hope I shal you tell a thing,  
That shal by reson ben at your liking :  
For though myself be a ful vicious man,  
A moral tale yet I you tellen can,

Which

THE PARDONERES TALE. 181

Which I am wont to prechen, for to winne.  
Now hold your pees, my tale I wol beginne.

IN Flandres whilom was a compaignie  
Of yonge-folk, that haunteden folie,  
As hafard, riot, stewes, and tavernes;  
Wheras with harpes, lutes, and giternes, 12400  
They dance and plaie at dis bothe day and night,  
And ete also, and drinke over hir might;  
Thurgh which they don the devil sacrifice  
Within the devils temple, in cursed wise,  
By superfluitee abhominable.  
Hir othes ben so gret and so damnable,  
That it is grisly for to here hem fwere.  
Our blisful lordes body they to-tere;  
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ynough;  
And eche of hem at others finne lough. 12410

And right anon in comen tombefteres  
Fetis and finale, and yonge fruitefteres,  
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,  
Which ben the veray devils officeres,  
To kindle and blow the fire of lecherie,  
That is annexed unto glotonie.  
The holy writ take I to my witnesse,  
That luxurie is in wine and dronkenesse,



182 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Lo, how that drunken Loth unkindely  
Lay by his daughters two unwetingly, 12429  
So dronke he was he n'iste what he wrought.

Herodes, who so wel the stories fought,  
Whan he of wine replete was at his feste,  
Right at his owen table he yave his heste  
To sleen the Baptist John ful gilteles.

Seneca faith a good word douteles :  
He faith he can no difference find  
Betwix a man that is out of his mind,  
And a man whiche that is dronkelew :  
But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrew, 12430  
Perfevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.

O glotonie, full of cursednesse ;  
O cause first of our confusion,  
O original of our damnation,  
Til Crist had bought us with his blood again,  
Loketh, how dere, shortly for to sain,  
Abought was thilke cursed vilanie :  
Corrupt was all this world for glotonie.

Adam our father, and his wif also,  
Fro Paradis, to labour and to wo, 12440  
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.  
For while that Adam fasted, as I rede,  
He was in Paradis, and whan that he  
Ete of the fruit defended on a tree,

Anon

THE PARDONERES TALE. 183

Anon he was out cast to wo and peine.  
 O glotonie, on thee wel ought us plaine.  
 O, wist a man how many maladies  
 Folwen of exceffe and of glotonies,  
 He wolde ben the more mesurable  
 Of his diete, sitting at his table. 12450  
 Alas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,  
 Maketh that Est and West, and North and South,  
 In erthe, in air, in water, men to-fwinke,  
 To gete a gloton deintee mete and drinke.  
 Of this matere, O Poule, wel canst thou trete.  
 Mete unto wombe, and wombe eke unto mete  
 Shal God destroien bothe, as Paulus saith.  
 Alas! a foule thing is it by my faith  
 To say this word, and fouler is the dede,  
 Whan man so drinketh of the white and rede,  
 That of his throte he maketh his privee 12461  
 Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.

The Apostle saith weping ful pitoussly,  
 Ther walken many, of which you told have I,  
 I say it now weping with pitous vois,  
 That they ben enemies of Cristes crois:  
 Of whiche the end is deth, womb is hir God,  
 O wombe, O belly, stinking is thy cod,  
 Fulfilled of dong and of corruptioun;  
 At either end of thee foule is the foun, 12470

N 4

How



184 THE PARDONERES TALE.

How gret labour and coſt is thee to find !  
 Thiſe cokes how they ſtamp, and ſtrein, and grind,  
 And turnen ſubſtance into accident,  
 To fulfill all thy likerous talent !  
 Out of the harde bones knocken they  
 The mary, for they caſten nought away,  
 That may go thurgh the gullet ſoft and ſote ;  
 Of ſpicerie, of leef, of barke, and rote,  
 Shal ben his fauſe ymaked by delit  
 To make him yet a newer appetit. 12480  
 But certes he, that haunteth ſwiche delices,  
 Is ded, while that he liveth in tho vices.

A lecherous thing is wine, and dronkenefſe  
 Is ful of ſtriving and of wretchedneſſe.  
 O dronken man, diſfigured is thy face,  
 Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to embrace :  
 And thurgh thy dronken noſe ſemeth the ſoun,  
 As though thou ſaideſt ay, Sampſoun, Sampſoun :  
 And yet, God wot, Sampſoun dronk never no wine.  
 Thou falleſt, as it were a ſtiked ſwine : 12490  
 Thy tonge is loſt, and all thin honeſt cure,  
 For dronkenefſe is veray ſepulture  
 Of mannes wit, and his diſcretion.  
 In whom that drinke hath domination,  
 He can no conſeil kepe, it is no drede.  
 Now kepe you fro the white and fro the rede,

And

And namely fro the white wine of Lepe,  
 That is to sell in Fishstrete and in Chepe.  
 This wine of Spaigne crepeth subtilly  
 In other wines growing faste by, 12500  
 Of which ther-riseth swiche fumositee,  
 That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,  
 And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,  
 He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe,  
 Not at the Rochell, ne at Burdeux toun;  
 And thanne wol he say, Sampfoun, Sampfoun.

But herkeneth, lordings, o word, I you pray,  
 That all the foveraine actes, dare I say,  
 Of victories in the Olde Testament,  
 Thurgh veray God, that is omnipotent, 12510  
 Were don in abstinence and in prayere:  
 Loketh the Bible, and ther ye mow it lere.

Loke Attila, the grete conquerour,  
 Died in his slepe, with shame and dishonour,  
 Bleding ay at his nose in dronkenesse:  
 A capitaine shulde live in sobrenesse.

And over all this, aviseth you right wel,  
 What was commanded unto Lamuel;  
 Not Samuel, but Lamuel say I.  
 Redeth the Bible, and find it exprefly 12520  
 Of wine yeving to hem that have justice.  
 No more of this, for it may wel suffice.

And



And now that I have spoke of glotonie,  
 Now wol I you defenden hasardrie.  
 Hasard is veray moder of lesinges,  
 And of deceite, and cursed forsweringes :  
 Blaspheming of Crist, manslaughter, and waft also  
 Of catel, and of time ; and forthermo  
 It is reprove, and contrary of honour,  
 For to ben hold a comun hasardour, 12530  
 And ever the higher he is of estat,  
 The more he is holden defolat.  
 If that a Prince useth hasarderie,  
 In alle governance and policie  
 He is, as by comun opinion,  
 Yhold the lesse in reputation.

Stilbon, that was a wise embassadour,  
 Was sent to Corinth with ful gret honour  
 Fro Calidone, to maken hem alliance :  
 And whan he came, it happed him *par chance*, 12540  
 That all the gretest that were of that lond  
 Yplaying atte hasard he hem fond.  
 For which, as sone as that it mighte be,  
 He stale him home agein to his contree,  
 And sayde ther, I wol not lese my name,  
 Ne wol not take on me so gret defame,  
 You for to allie unto non hasardours.  
 Sendeth som other wise embassadours,

For

For by my trouthe, me were leyer die,  
 Than I you shuld to hasardours allie. 12550  
 For ye, that ben so glorious in honours,  
 Shal not allie you to non hasardours,  
 As by my wille, ne as by my trettee.  
 This wise philosophre thus sayd he.

Loke eke how to the king Demetrius  
 The king of Parthes, as the book sayth us,  
 Sent him a pair of dis of gold in sorne,  
 For he had used hasard therbefore :  
 For which he held his glory and his renoun  
 At no value or reputioun. 12560  
 Lordes may finden other maner play  
 Honest ynough to drive the day away.

Now wol I speke of othes false and grete  
 A word or two, as olde bookes trette.  
 Gret swering is a thing abhominable,  
 And false swering is yet more reprevable.  
 The highe God forbad swering at al,  
 Witnesse on Mathew : but in special  
 Of swering sayth the holy Jeremie,  
 Thou shalt swere soth thin othes, and not lie; 12570  
 And swere in dome, and eke in rightwisnesse;  
 But idel swering is a cursednesse.

Behold and see, that in the firste table  
 Of highe Goddes heestes honourable,

How



188 THE PARDONERES TALE.

How that the second heft of him is this,  
 Take not my name in idel or amis.  
 Lo, rather he forbedeth swiche fwering,  
 Than homicide, or many an other thing.  
 I say that as by ordre thus it stondeth;  
 This knoweth he that his heftes underftondeth, 12580  
 How that the second heft of God is that.  
 And forthermore, I wol thee tell all plat,  
 That vengeance shal not parten from his hous,  
 That of his othes is outrageous.  
 By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,  
 And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hailes,  
 Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treye :  
 By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,  
 This dagger shal thurghout thin herte go.  
 This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two, 12590  
 Forfwering, ire, falsenesse, and homicide.  
 Now for the love of Crist that for us dide,  
 Leteth your othes, bothe gret and smale.  
 But, fires, now wol I tell you forth my tale.  
 Thise riotoures three, of which I tell,  
 Long erft or prime rong of any bell,  
 Were fet hem in a taverne for to drinke :  
 And as they fat, they herd a belle clinke  
 Beforn a corps, was caried to his grave :  
 That on of hem gan callen to his knave, 12600

Go

Go bet, quod he, and axe redily,  
 What corps is this, that passeth here forth by :  
 And loke that thou report his name wel.

Sire, quod this boy, it nedeth never a del ;  
 It was me told or ye came here two houres ;  
 He was parde an old felaw of youres,  
 And sodenly he was yslain to-night,  
 Fordronke as he sat on his benche upright,  
 Ther came a privee theef, men clepen Deth,  
 That in this contree all the peple sleth, 12610  
 And with his spere he smote his herte atwo,  
 And went his way withouten wordes mo.  
 He hath a thousand slain this pestilence :  
 And, maister, or ye come in his presence,  
 Me thinketh that it were ful necessarie  
 For to beware of swiche an adversarie :  
 Beth redy for to mete him evermore.  
 Thus taughte me my dame, I say no more.

By Seinte Marie, sayd this tavernere,  
 The child sayth soth, for he hath slain this yere 12620  
 Hens over a mile, within a gret village,  
 Both man and woman, child, and hyne, and page ;  
 I trowe his habitation be there :  
 To ben avised gret wisdome it were,  
 Or that he did a man a dishonour.

Ye, Goddes armes, quod this riotour,

190 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Is it swiche peril with him for to mete?  
 I shal him seke by stile and eke by strete.  
 I make a vow by Goddes digne bones.  
 Herkeneth, felawes, we three ben alle ones: 12630  
 Let eche of us hold up his hond to other,  
 And eche of us becomen others brother;  
 And we wol slen this false traitour deth:  
 He shal be slain, he that so many sleth,  
 By Goddes dignitee, or it be night.

Togeder han thise three hir trouthes plight  
 To live and dien eche of hem for other,  
 As though he were his owen boren brother.  
 And up they stert al dronken in this rage,  
 And forth they gon towardses that village, 12640  
 Of which the taverner had spoke befor,  
 And many a grisly oth than have they sworn;  
 And Cristes blessed body they to-rent;  
 Deth shal be ded, if that we may him hent.

Whan they han gon not fully half a mile,  
 Right as they wold han troden over a stile,  
 An olde man and a poure with hem mette.  
 This olde man ful mekely hem grette,  
 And sayde, thus; Now, lordes, God you see!

The proudest of thise riotoures three 12650  
 Answerd agen; What? cherl, with fory grace,  
 Why art thou all forwrapped save thy face?

Why



THE PARDONERES TALE. 191

Why livest thou so longe in so gret age?

This olde man gan loke in his visage,  
And sayde thus; For I ne cannot finde  
A man, though that I walked into Inde,  
Neither in citee, ne in no village,  
That wolde change his youthe for min age;  
And therfore mote I han min age still  
As longe time as it is Goddes will. 12660

Ne deth, alas! ne will not han my lif.  
Thus walke I like a reſteles caitif,  
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,

I knocke with my ſtaf, erlich and late,  
And ſay to hire, Leve mother, let me in.  
Lo, how I vaniſh, fleſh, and blood, and ſkin:  
Alas! whan ſhul my bones ben at reſte?  
Mother, with you wold I changen my cheſte,  
That in my chambre longe time hath be,  
Ye, for an heren clout to wrap in me. 12670  
But yet to me ſhe wol not don that grace,  
For which ful pale and welked is my face.

But, fires, to you it is no curteſie  
To ſpeke unto an olde man vilanie,  
But he treſpaſe in word or elles in dede.  
In holy writ ye moun yourſelven rede;  
Ageins an olde man, hore upon his hede,  
Ye ſhuld ariſe: therfore I yeve you rede,

Ne

## 192 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Ne doth unto an olde man non harm now,  
 No more than that ye wold a man did you 12680  
 In age, if that ye may so long abide.  
 And God be with you, wher ye go or ride.  
 I moſte go thider as I have to go.

Nay, olde cherl, by God thou ſhalt not ſo,  
 Sayde this other hafardour anon;  
 Thou parteſt not ſo lightly by Seint John.  
 Thou ſpake right now of thilke traitour deth,  
 That in this contree all our frendes fleth;  
 Have here my trouth as thou art his eſpie;  
 Tell wher he is, or thou ſhalt it abie, 12690  
 By God and by the holy Sacrement;  
 For ſothly thou art on of his aſſent  
 To ſlen us yonge folk, thou falſe theſe.

Now, ſires, quod he, if it be you ſo leſe  
 To finden deth, tourne up this croked way;  
 For in that grove I left him by my fay  
 Under a tree, and ther he wol abide;  
 Ne for your boſt he wol him nothing hide.  
 Se ye that oke? right ther ye ſhuln him finde.  
 God ſave you, that bought agen mankind, 12700  
 And you amende; thus ſayd this olde man.

And everich of theſe riotoures ran,  
 Til they came to the tree, and ther they found  
 Of Floreins fine of gold ycoined round,

Wel

THE PARDONERES TALE. 193

Wel nigh an eighte bushels, as hem thought.  
 No lenger ~~æ~~ than after deth they fought,  
 But eche of hem so glad was of the fight,  
 For that the floreins ben so faire and bright,  
 That doun they sette hem by the precious hord.  
 The werste of hem he spake the firste word. 12710

Brethren, quod he, take kepe what I shal say;  
 My wit is gret, though that I bourde and play.  
 This tresour hath fortune unto us yeven  
 In mirth and jolitee our lif to liven,  
 And lightly as it cometh, so wol we spend.  
 Ey, Goddes precious dignitee, who wend  
 To-day, that we shuld han so faire a grace?  
 But might this gold be caried fro this place  
 Home to myn hous, or elles unto youre,  
 (For wel I wote that all this gold is oures). 12720  
 Thanne were we in high felicitee.  
 But trewely by day it may not be;  
 Men wolden say that we were theeves strong,  
 And for our owen tresour don us hong.  
 This tresour must ycaried be by night  
 As wisely and as sleighly as it might.  
 Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle  
 We drawe, and let see wher the cut wol falle:  
 And he that hath the cut, with herte blith,  
 Shal rennen to the toun, and that ful swith, 12730



194 THE PARDONERES TALE.

And bring us bred and win ful prively :  
 And two of us shal kepen subtilly  
 This tresour wel : and if he wol not tarien,  
 Whan it is night, we wol this tresour carien  
 By on assent, wher as us thinketh best.

That on of hem the cut brought in his fest,  
 And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wold falle,  
 And it fell on the yongest of hem alle :  
 And forth toward the toun he went anon.

And al so sone as that he was agon, 1274

That on of hem spake thus unto that other ;  
 Thou woteft wel thou art my sworn brother,  
 Thy profite wol I tell thee right anon.

Thou wost wel that our felaw is agon,  
 And here is gold, and that ful gret plentee,  
 That shal departed ben among us three.

But natheles, if I can shape it so,  
 That it departed were among us two,  
 Had I not don a frendes turn to thee ?

That other answerd, I n'ot how that may be :  
 He wote wel that the gold is with us tweye. 1275  
 What shuln we don ? what shuln we to him feye ?

Shal it be conseil ? sayd the firste shrewe ;  
 And I shal tellen thee in wordes fewe  
 What we shul don, and bring it wel aboute.  
 I grante, quod that other, out of doute,

That

THE PARDONERES TALE. 195

That by my trouth I wol thee not bewreie.

Now, quod the first, thou wost wel we ben tweie;  
And tweie of us shul strenger be than on.

Loke, whan that he is set, thou right anon 12760

Arise, as though thou woldest with him play;

And I shal rive him thurgh the sides tway,

While that thou stroglest with him as in game,

And with thy dagger loke thou do the same;

And than shal all this gold departed be;

My dere frend, betwixen thee and me:

Than moun we bothe our lustes al fulfille,

And play at dis right at our owen wille.

And thus accorded ben thise shrewes tweye,

To slen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye. 12770

This yongest, which that wente to the toun,

Ful oft in herte he rolleth up and down

The beautee of thise floreins newe and bright:

O Lord, quod he, if so were that I might

Have all this trefour to myself alone,

Ther n'is no man that liveth under the trone

Of God, that shulde live so mery as I.

And at the last the fend our enemy

Putte in his thought, that he shuld poison beye,

With which he mighte slen his felaws tweye. 12780

For why, the fend fond him in swiche living,

That he had leve to sorwe him to bring.



196 THE PARDONERES TALE.

For this was outrely his ful entente  
To slen hem both, and never to repente.

And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,  
Into the toun unto a Potecary,

And praied him that he him wolde sell  
Som poison, that he might his ratouns quell.  
And eke ther was a polkat in his hawe,<sup>1</sup>

That, as he sayd, his capons had yslawe : 12790

And fayn he wolde him wreken, if he might,  
Of vermine, that destroyed hem by night.

The Potecary answerd, Thou shalt have  
A thing, as wisly God my soule save,

In all this world ther n'is no creature,

That ete or dronke hath of this confecture,  
Not but the mountance of a corne of whete,

That he ne shal his lif anon forlete ;

Ye, sterue he shal, and that in lesse while,

Than thou wolt gon a pas not but a mile : 12800

This poison is so strong and violent.

This cursed man hath in his hond yhent

This poison in a box, and swithe he ran

Into the nexte strete unto a man,

And borwed of him large botelles three ;

And in the two the poison poured he ;

The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke,

For all the night he shope him for to swinke

In



THE PARDONERES TALE. 197

In caryng of the gold out of that place.

And whan this riotour with fory grace 12810  
Hath filled with win his grete botelles three,  
To his felawes agen repaireth he.

What nedeth it therof to fermon more?  
For right as they had cast his deth before,  
Right so they han him flain, and that anon.  
And whan that this was don, thus spake that on;  
Now let us fit and drinke, and make us mery,  
And afterward we wiln his body bery.  
And with that word it happed him *par cas*,  
To take the botelle, ther the poison was, 12820  
And dronke, and yave his felaw drinke also,  
For which anon they storven bothe two.

But certes I suppose that Avicenne  
Wrote never in no canon, ne in no fenne,  
Mo wonder signes of empoisoning,  
Than had thise wretches two or hir ending.  
Thus ended ben thise homicides two,  
And eke the false empoisoner also.

O cursednesse of alle cursednesse!  
O traitours homicide! O wickednesse! 12830  
O glotonie, luxurie, and hasardrie!  
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vilanie,  
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!  
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,

O 3

That

198 THE PARDONERES TALE.

That to thy Creatour, which that thee wrought,  
And with his precious herte-blood thee bought,  
Thou art so false and so unkind, alas !

Now, good men, God foryeve you your trespas;  
And ware you fro the finne of avarice.  
Min holy pardon may you all warice, 12840  
So that ye offre nobles or starlinges,  
Or elles silver broches, spones, ringes.  
Boweth your hed under this holy Bulle,  
Cometh up, ye wives, and offreth of your wolle;  
Your names I entre here in my roll anon;  
Into the blisse of heven shul ye gon;  
I you assoile by min high powere,  
You that wiln offre, as clene and eke as clere  
As ye were borne. Lo, fires, thus I preche;  
And Jesu Crist, that is our foules leche, 12850  
So graunte you his pardon to receive;  
For that is best, I wol you not deceive.

But, fires, o word forgate I in my tale;  
I have relikes and pardon in my male,  
As faire as any man in Englelond,  
Which were me yeven by the Popes hond,  
If any of you wol of devotion  
Offren, and han min absolution,  
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth here adoun,  
And mekely receiveth my pardoun. 12860

Or

THE PARDONERES TALE. 199

Or elles taketh pardon, as ye wende,  
 Al newe and freshe at every tounes ende,  
 So that ye offren alway newe and newe,  
 Nobles or pens, which that ben good and trewe.  
 It is an honour to everich that is here,  
 That ye moun have a suffisant pardonere  
 To assoilen you in contree as ye ride,  
 For adventures, which that moun betide.  
 Paraventure ther may falle on, or two,  
 Doun of his hors, and breke his necke atwo.  
 Loke, which a seurtee is it to you alle, 1287  
 That I am in your felawship yfalle,  
 That may assoile you bothe more and lasse,  
 Whan that the soule-shal fro the body passe.  
 I rede that our hoste shal beginne,  
 For he is most envoluped in sinne.  
 Come forth, fire hoste, and offre first anon,  
 And thou shalt kisse the reliques everich on,  
 Ye for a grote; unbokel anon thy purse.

Nay nay, quod he, than have I Cristes curse,  
 Let be, quod he, it shal not be, so the ich. 1288  
 Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde brech,  
 And swere it were a relike of a feint,  
 Though it were with thy foundement depeint.  
 But by the crois, which that Seint Heleine fond,  
 I wolde I had thin coilons in min hond,



200 THE PARDONERES TALE.

Instede of relikes, or of seintuarie.

Let cut hem of, I wol thee help hem carie;  
They shul be shrined in an hogges tord.

This Pardoner answered not a word; 12899  
So wroth he was, no word ne wolde he say.

Now, quod our hoste, I wol no lenger play  
With thee, ne with non other angry man.

But right anon the worthy knight began,  
(Whan that he saw that all the peple lough)  
No more of this, for it is right ynough.

Sire Pardoner, be mery and glad of chere;  
And ye, sire hoste, that ben to me so dere,  
I pray you that ye kisse the Pardoner;  
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner, 12900  
And as we diden, let us laugh and play.  
Anon they kised, and riden forth hir way.

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

OUR hoste upon his stirrops stode anon,  
And saide; Good men, herkeneth everich on,  
This was a thrifty tale for the nones.

Sire parish preest, quod he, for Goddes bones,  
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore:

I see wel that ye lerned men in lore  
Can moche good, by Goddes dignitee.

The Person him answerd, *Benedicite!*

12910  
What

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE. 201

What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere ?

Our hoste answerd, O Jankin, be ye there ?

Now, good men, quod our hoste, herkneth to me.

I smell a loller in the wind, quod he.

Abideth for Goddes digne passion,

For we shul han a predication :

This loller here wol prechen us fomwhat.

Nay by my fathers foule, that shal he nat,

Sayde the Shipman, here shal he nat preche,

He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche. 12920

We leven all in the gret God, quod he.

He wolde sowen fom difficultee,

Or springen cockle in our clene corne.

And therefore, hoste, I warne thee beforne,

My joly body shal a tale telle,

And I shal clinken you so mery a belle,

That I shal waken all this compaignie :

But it shal not ben of philosophie,

Ne of phyfike, ne termes queinte of lawe ;

Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe. 12930

THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

A MERCHANT whilom dwelled at Seint Denise,

That riche was, for which men held him wise.

A wif he had of excellent beautee,

And compaignable, and revelous was she,

Which



## 202 THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

Which is a thing that causeth more dispence,  
 Than worth is all the chere and reverence,  
 That men hem don at festes and at dances.  
 Swiche salutations and contenances  
 Passen, as doth a shadwe upon the wall:  
 But wo is him that payen mote for all. 1294  
 The fely husband algate he mote pay,  
 He mote us clothe and he mote us array  
 All for his owen worship richely:  
 In which array we dancen jolily.  
 And if that he may not paraventure,  
 Or elles lust not swiche dispence endure,  
 But thinketh it is wasted and ylost,  
 Than mote another payen for our cost,  
 Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.

This noble Marchant held a worthy hous, 1295  
 For which he had all day so gret repaire  
 For his largesse, and for his wif was faire,  
 That wonder is: but herkeneth to my tale.

Amonges all thise gestes gret and finale,  
 Ther was a Monk, a faire man and a bold,  
 I trow a thritty winter he was old,  
 That ever in on was drawing to that place.  
 This yonge Monk, that was so faire of face,  
 Acquainted was so with this goode man,  
 Sithen that hir firste knowlege began, 1296  
 That



THE SHIPMAN'S TALE. 203

That in his hous as familier was he,  
As it possible is any frend to be.  
And for as mochel as this goode man  
And eke this Monk, of which that I began,  
Were bothe two yborne in o village,  
The Monk him claimeth, as for cofinage,  
And he again him sayd not ones nay,  
But was as glad therof, as foule of day :  
For to his herte it was a gret plesance.

Thus ben they knit with eterne alliance, 12970  
And eche of hem gan other for to ensure  
Of brotherhed, while that hir lif may dure.

Free was Dan John, and namely of dispence  
As in that hous, and ful of diligence  
To don plesance, and also gret costage;  
He not forgate to yeve the leste page  
In all that hous; but, after hir degree,  
He yave the lord, and fithen his meinee,  
Whan that he came, som maner honest thing;  
For which they were as glad of his coming 12980  
As foule is fayn, whan that the sonne up riseth,  
No more of this as now, for it suffiseth.

But so befell, this Marchant on a day  
Shope him to maken redy his array  
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,  
To byen ther a portion of ware :

For

204 THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

For which he hath to Paris sent anon  
A messenger, and praied hath Dan John  
That he shuld come to Seint Denis, and pleie  
With him, and with his wif, a day or tweie, 12990  
Or he to Brugges went, in alle wise.

This noble Monk, of which I you devise,  
Hath of his Abbot, as him list, licence,  
(Because he was a man of high prudence,  
And eke an officer out for to ride,  
To seen hir granges, and hir bernes wide)  
And unto Seint Denis he cometh anon.

Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,  
Our dere cousin, ful of curtesie?  
With him he brought a jubbe of Malvesie, 13000  
And eke another ful of fine Vernage,  
And volatile, as ay was his usage:  
And thus I let hem ete, and drinke, and pleye,  
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye,

The thridde day this marchant up ariseth,  
And on his nedes sadly him aviseth:  
And up into his countour hous goth he,  
To reken with himselfen, wel may be,  
Of thilke yere, how that it with him stood,  
And how that he dispended had his good, 13010  
And if that he encrefed were or non.  
His bookes and his bagges many on

He

THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 205

He layth befor him on his counting bord.  
 Ful riche was his trefour and his hord ;  
 For which ful fast his countour dore he shet ;  
 And eke he n'olde no man shuld him let  
 Of his accountes, for the mene time :  
 And thus he sit, til it was passed prime.

Dan John was risen in the morwe also,  
 And in the gardin walketh to and fro, 13020  
 And hath his thinges sayd ful curteisly.

This goode wif came walking prively  
 Into the gardin, ther he walketh soft,  
 And him salueth, as she hath don oft :  
 A maiden child came in hire compaignie,  
 Which as hire lust she may governe and gie,  
 For yet under the yerde was the maide.

O dere cofin min Dan John, she saide,  
 What aileth you so rathe for to arise ?

Nece, quod he, it ought ynough fuffise 13030  
 Five houres for to slepe upon a night :  
 But it were for an olde appalled wight,  
 As ben thise wedded men, that lie and dare,  
 As in a fourme sitteth a very hare,  
 Were al forstraught with houndes gret and smale.  
 But, dere nece, why be ye so pale ?  
 I trowe certes, that our goode man  
 Hath you laboured, sith this night began,

That



206 THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

That you were nede to resten hastily.  
And with that word he lough ful merily, 13040  
And of his owen thought he wexe all red.

This faire wif gan for to shake hire hed,  
And saied thus; Ye, God wote all, quod she.  
Nay, cofin min, it stant not so with me.  
For by that God, that yave me soule and lif,  
In all the reame of Fraunce is ther no wif,  
That lasse lust hath to that fory play:  
For I may singe alas and wala wa  
That I was borne, but to no wight (quod she)  
Dare I not tell how that it stant with me. 13050  
Wherfore I thinke out of this lond to wende,  
Or elles of myself to make an ende,  
So ful am I of drede and eke of care.

This monk began upon this wif to stare,  
And sayd, Alas! my nece, God forbede,  
That ye for any forwe, or any drede,  
Fordo yourself: but telleth me your grese,  
Paraventure I may in your mischese  
Conseile or helpe: and therfore telleth me  
All your annoy, for it shal ben secree. 13060  
For on my Portos here I make an oth,  
That never in my lif, for lese ne loth,  
Ne shal I of no conseil you bewray.

The same agen to you, quod she, I say.

THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 207

By God and by this Portos I you swere,  
 Though men me wolden all in peces tere,  
 Ne shal I never, for to gon to helle,  
 Bewrey o word of thing that ye me tell,  
 Nought for no cosinage, ne alliance,  
 But veraily for love and affiance. 13070  
 Thus ben they sworne, and hereupon they kiste,  
 And eche of hem told other what hem liste.

Cosin, quod she, if that I had a space,  
 As I have non, and namely in this place,  
 Than wold I tell a legend of my lif,  
 What I have suffred sith I was a wif  
 With min husbond, al be he your cosin.

Nay, quod this monk, by God and Seint Martin,  
 He n'is no more cosin unto me,  
 Than is the leef that hangeth on the tree: 13080  
 I clepe him so by Seint Denis of France  
 To han the more cause of acquaintance  
 Of you, which I have loved specially  
 Aboven alle women fikerly,  
 This swere I you on my professioun:  
 Telleth your grese, lest that he come adoun,  
 And hasteth you, and goth away anon.

My dere love, quod she, o my Dan John,  
 Ful lese were me this conseil for to hide,  
 But out it mote, I may no lenger abide. 13090

Mya

Myn husbond is to me the werste man,  
 That ever was fith that the world began :  
 But fith I am a wif, it fit not me  
 To tellen no wight of our privetee,  
 Neither in bed, ne in non other place ;  
 God shilde I shulde it tellen for his grace ;  
 A wif ne shal not fayn of hire husbond  
 But all honour, as I can understond ;  
 Save unto you thus moch I tellen shal :  
 As helpe me God, he is nought worth at all, 13100  
 In no degree, the value of a flie.  
 But yet me greveth most his nigardie :  
 And wel ye wot, that women naturally  
 Desiren thinges fixe, as wel as I.  
 They wolden that hir husbondes shulden be  
 Hardy, and wise, and riche, and therto free,  
 And buxome to his wif, and fresh a-bedde.  
 But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,  
 For his honour myselven for to array,  
 A sonday next I muste nedes pay 13110  
 An hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.  
 Yet were me lever that I were unborne,  
 Than me were don a sclandre or vilanie.  
 And if min husbond eke might it espie,  
 I n'ere but lost ; and therfore I you prey  
 Lene me this summe, or elles mote I dey.

Dan



THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 209

Dan John, I fay, lene me this hundred frankes ;  
 Parde I wol not faille you my thanks,  
 If that you list to do that I you pray.  
 For at a certain day I wol you pay, 13120  
 And do to you what plesance and service  
 That I may don, right as you list devise :  
 And but I do, God take on me vengeance,  
 As foul as ever had Genelon of France.

This gentil monk answerd in this manere ;  
 Now trewely, min owen lady dere,  
 I have (quod he) on you so grete a routhe,  
 That I you swere, and plighte you my trouthe,  
 That whan your hufbond is to Flandres fare,  
 I wol deliver you out of this care, 13130  
 For I wol bringen you an hundred frankes.  
 And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,  
 And hire embraced hard, and kiste hire oft.  
 Goth now your way, quod he, al stille and soft,  
 And let us dine as sone as that ye may,  
 For by my kalender it is prime of day :  
 Goth now, and beth as trewe as I shal be.

Now elles God forbede, fire, quod she ;  
 And forth she goth, as joly as a pie,  
 And bad the cokes that they shuld hem hie, 13140  
 So that men mighten dine, and that anon.  
 Up to hire hufbond is this wif ygon,

And knocketh at his countour boldely.  
*Qui est la?* quod he. Peter, it am I,  
 Quod she. What, fire, how longe wol ye fast?  
 How longe time wol ye reken and cast  
 Your summes, and your bookes, and your thinges?  
 The devil have part of all fwiche rekeninges.  
 Ye han ynough parde of Goddes fonde.  
 Come down to-day, and let your bagges stonde.  
 Ne be ye not afhamed, that Dan John 1315  
 Shal fasting all this day elenge gon?  
 What? let us here a masse, and go we dine.

Wif, quod this man, litel canst thou divine  
 The curious befinesse that we have:  
 For of us chapmen, all so God me save,  
 And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,  
 Scarfly amonges twenty, ten shul thrive  
 Continuelly, lasting unto oure age.  
 We moun wel maken chere and good visage, 1316  
 And driven forth the world as it may be,  
 And kepen oure estat in privitee,  
 Til we be ded, or elles that we play  
 A pilgrimage, or gon out of the way.  
 And therefore have I gret necessitee  
 Upon this queinte world to avisen me.  
 For evermore mote we stond in drede  
 Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhede.

THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 211

To Flandres wol I go to-morwe at day,  
And come agein as sone as ever I may : 13170

For which, my dere wif, I thee beseke  
As be to every wight buxom and meke,  
And for to kepe our good be curious,  
And honestly governe wel our hous.  
Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise,  
That to a thrifty household may suffice.

Thee lacketh non array, ne no vitaille ;  
Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not faille.  
And with that word his countour dore he shette,  
And doun he goth ; no lenger wold he lette ;  
And hastily a masse was ther saide, 13181

And spedily the tables were ylaide,  
And to the diner faste they hem spedde,  
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.

And after diner Dan John sobrely  
This chapman toke apart, and prively  
He said him thus ; Cofin, it stondeth so,  
That, wel I see, to Brugges ye wol go,  
God and Seint Austin spede you and gide.  
I pray you, cofin, wisely that ye ride ; 13190

Governeth you also of your diete  
Attemprely, and namely in this hete.  
Betwix us two nedeth no strange fare ;  
Farewel, cofin, God shilde you fro care.



112 THE SHIPMANNES TALE

If any thing ther be by day or night,  
If it lie in my power and my might,  
That ye me wol command in any wise,  
It shal be don, right as ye wol devise.

But o thing or ye go, if it may be,  
I wolde prayen you for to lene me 13200  
An hundred frankes for a weke or tweye,  
For certain bestes that I muste beye,  
To storen with a place that is oures :  
(God helpe me so, I wold that it were youre)  
I shal not faille surely of my day,  
Not for a thousand frankes, a mile way.  
But let this thing be secree, I you preye ;  
For yet to-night thise bestes mote I beye.  
And fare now wel, min owen cofin dere,  
*Grand mercy* of your cost and of your chere. 13210

This noble marchant gentilly anon  
Answerd and said, O cofin min Dan John,  
Now fikerly this is a final requeste :  
My gold is youre, whan that it you leste,  
And not only my gold, but my chaffare :  
Take what you leste, God shilde that ye spare.  
But o thing is, ye know it wel ynough  
Of chapmen, that hir money is hir plough.  
We moun creancen while we han a name,  
But goodles for to ben it is no game. 13220

Pay

Pay it agen, whan it lith in your ese ;  
 After my might ful fayn wold I you plesse,  
 Thise hundred frankes fet he forth anon,  
 And prively he toke hem to Dan John :  
 No wight in al this world wist of this lone,  
 Saving this marchant, and Dan John alone.  
 They drinke, and speke, and rome a while and pleye,  
 Til that Dan John rideth to his abbeye.

The morwe came, and forth this marchant rideth  
 To Flandres ward, his prentis wel him gideth,  
 Til he came in to Brugges merily. 13231  
 Now goth this marchant faste and besily  
 About his nede, and bieth, and creanceth ;  
 He neither playeth at the dis, ne danceth ;  
 But as a marchant, shortly for to tell,  
 He ledeth his lif, and ther I let him dwell.

The sonday next the marchant was agon,  
 To Seint Denis ycomen is Dan John,  
 With croune and berde all fresh and newe yshave,  
 In all the hous ther n'as so litel a knave, 13240  
 Ne no wight elles, that he n'as ful fain,  
 For that my lord Dan John was come again,  
 And shortly to the point right for to gon,  
 This faire wif accordeth with Dan John,  
 That for thise hundred frankes he shuld all night  
 Haven hire in his armes bolt upright :

And this accord parformed was in dede.  
 In mirth all night a besy lif they lede  
 Til it was day, that Dan John yede his way,  
 And bad the meinie farewel, have good day. 13250  
 For non of hem, ne no wight in the toun,  
 Hath of Dan John right non suspectioun;  
 And forth he rideth home to his abbey,  
 Or wher him list, no more of him I sey.

This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,  
 To Seint Denis he gan for to repaire,  
 And with his wif he maketh feste and chere,  
 And telleth hire that chaffare is so dere,  
 That nedes muste he make a chevissance,  
 For he was bonde in a recognisance, 13260  
 To payen twenty thousand sheldes anon.  
 For which this marchant is to Paris gon  
 To borwe of certain frendes that he hadde  
 A certain frankes, and som with him he ladde.  
 And whan that he was come in to the toun,  
 For gret chiertee and gret affectioun  
 Unto Dan John he goth him first to pleye;  
 Not for to axe or borwe of him moneye,  
 But for to wete and seen of his welfare,  
 And for to tellen him of his chaffare, 13270  
 As frendes don, whan they ben mette in fere.

Dan John him maketh feste and mery chere;

And



THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 215

And he him tolde agen ful specially,  
 How he had wel ybought and graciously  
 (Thanked be God) all hole his marchandise;  
 Save that he must in alle manere wise  
 Maken a chevifance, as for his beste:  
 And than he shulde ben in joye and reste.  
 Dan John answered, Certes I am fain,  
 That ye in hele be comen home again: 13280  
 And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,  
 Of twenty thousand sheldes shuld ye not misse,  
 For ye so kindely this other day  
 Lente me gold, and as I can and may  
 I thanke you, by God and by Seint Jame.  
 But natheles I toke unto our Dame,  
 Your wif at home, the same gold again  
 Upon your benche, she wote it wel certain,  
 By certain tokenes that I can hire tell.  
 Now by your leve, I may no lenger dwell; 13290  
 Our abbot wol out of this toun anon,  
 And in his compaignie I muste gon.  
 Grete wel our dame, min owen nece swete,  
 And farewel, dere cosin, til we mete.

This marchant which that was ful ware and wise,  
 Creanced hath, and paide eke in Paris  
 To certain Lumbardes redy in hir hond  
 The summe of gold, and gate of hem his bond,

216 THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

And home he goth, mery as a popingay.  
 For wel he knew he stood in swiche array, 13300  
 That nedes muste he winne in that viage  
 A thousand frankes, above all his costage.

His wif ful redy mette him at the gate,  
 As she was wont of old usage algate :

And all that night in mirthe they ben sette,  
 For he was riche, and clerely out of dette.  
 Whan it was day, this marchant gan enbrace  
 His wif all newe, and kiste hire in hire face,  
 And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.

No more, quod she, by God ye have ynough :  
 And wantonly agen with him she plaide, 13311  
 Til at the last this marchant to hire saide.

By God, quod he, I am a litel wrothe  
 With you, my wif, although it be me lothe :  
 And wote ye why ? by God, as that I gesse,  
 That ye han made a manere strangenesse  
 Betwixen me and my cosin Dan John,  
 Ye shuld have warned me, or I had gon,  
 That he you had an hundred frankes paide  
 By redy token : and held him evil apaide, 13320  
 For that I to him spake of chevifance :  
 (Me femed so as by his contenance)  
 But natheles by God our heven king,  
 I thoughte not to axe of him no thing.

I pray

I pray thee, wif, ne do thou no more so.  
 Tell me alway, er that I fro thee go,  
 If any dettour hath in min absence  
 Ypaide thee, lest thurgh thy negligence  
 I might him axe a thing that he hath paide.

This wif was not aferde ne affraide, 13330  
 But boldely she faide, and that anon;  
 Mary I defie that false monk Dan John,  
 I kepe not of his tokenes never a del:  
 He toke me certain gold, I wote it wel.  
 What? evil thedome on his monkes snoute:  
 For, God it wote, I wend withouten doute,  
 That he had yeve it me, because of you,  
 To don therwith min honour and my prow,  
 For cofinage, and eke for *belle chere*,  
 That he hath had ful often times here. 13340  
 But fith I see I stonde in fwiche disjoint,  
 I wol answere you shortly to the point.

Ye have mo flakke dettours than am I:  
 For I wol pay you wel and redily  
 Fro day to day, and if so be I faille,  
 I am your wif, score it upon my taile,  
 And I shal pay as sone as ever I may.  
 For by my trouth, I have on min array,  
 And not in waste, bestowed it every del.  
 And for I have bestowed it so wel 13350  
 For



218 THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

For your honour, for Goddes sake I say,  
 As beth not wrothe, but let us laugh and play,  
 Ye shal my joly body han to wedde;  
 By God I n'll not pay you but a-bedde:  
 Foryeve it me, min owen spouse dere;  
 Turne hitherward and maketh better chere.

This marchant saw ther was no remedy:  
 And for to chide, it n'ere but a foly,  
 Sith that the thing may not amended be.  
 Now, wif, he said, and I foryeve it thee; 1336a  
 But by thy lif ne be no more so large;  
 Kepe bet my good, this yeve I thee in charge.  
 Thus endeth now my tale, and God us fende  
 Taling ynough, unto our lives ende.

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGUE.

WEL said by *corpus Domini*, quod our Hoste,  
 Now longe mote thou failen by the coste,  
 Thou gentil Maister, gentil Marinere.  
 God give the monke a thousand last quad yere.  
 A ha, felawes, beth ware of swiche a jape.  
 The monke put in the mannes hode an ape, 1337a  
 And in his wifes eke, by Seint Austin.  
 Draweth no monkes more into your in.

But

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGUE. 219

But now passe over, and let us feke aboute,  
Who shal now tellen first of all this route  
Another tale : and with that word he said,  
As curteisly as it had ben a maid,

My lady Prioreffe, by your leve,  
So that I wist I shuld you not agreve,  
I wolde demen, that ye tellen shold  
A tale next, if so were that ye wold. 13380

Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady dere ?  
Gladly, quod she, and faide as ye shul here.

THE PRIORESSES TALE.

O LORD our lord, thy name how merveillous  
Is in this large world ysprad ! (quod she)  
For not al only thy laude precious  
Parfourmed is by men of dignitee,  
But by the mouth of children thy bountee  
Parfourmed is, for on the brest fouking  
Somtime shewen they thin herying.

Wherefore in laude, as I can best and may, 13390  
Of thee and of the white lily flour,  
Which that thee bare, and is a maide alway,  
To tell a storie I wol do my labour ;  
Not that I may encrefen hire honour,

For

220 THE PRIORESSES TALE.

For she hireselven is honour and rote  
Of bountee, next hire sone, and soules bote.

O mother maide, o maide and nother fre,  
O bushe unbrent, brenning in Moyse's fight,  
That ravishedest down fro the deitee,  
Thurgh thin humbleesse, the goft that in thee alight ;  
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light, 1340  
Conceived was the fathers sapience :  
Helpe me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,  
Thy vertue and thy gret humilitee,  
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science :  
For somtime, lady, or men pray to thee,  
Thou goft befor of thy benignitee,  
And getest us the light of thy prayere,  
To giden us unto thy sone so dere. 13410

My conning is so weke, o blisful quene,  
For to declare thy grete worthineesse,  
That I ne may the weighte not sustene ;  
But as a child of twelf moneth old or lesse,  
That can unnethes any word expresse,  
Right so fare I, and therefore I you pray,  
Gideth my song, that I shal of you say.

THE



THER was in Asie, in a gret citee,  
 Amonges Cristen folk a Jewerie,  
 Sustened by a lord of that contree, 13420  
 For foule usure, and lucre of vilanie,  
 Hateful to Crist, and to his compaignie :  
 And thurgh the strete men mighten ride and wende,  
 For it was free, and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood  
 Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were  
 Children an hepe comen of Cristen blood,  
 That lerned in that scole yere by yere,  
 Swiche manere doctrine as men used there :  
 This is to say, to singen and to rede, 13430  
 As finale children don in hir childhede.

Among thise children was a widewes sone,  
 A litel clergion, sevene yere of age,  
 That day by day to scole was his wone,  
 And eke also, wheras he sey the image  
 Of Cristes moder, had he in usage,  
 As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say  
*Ave Marie*, as he goth by the way.

222 THE PRIORESSES TALE.

Thus hath this widewe hire litel sone ytaught  
 Our blisful Lady, Cristes moder dere, 13440  
 To worship ay, and he forgate it naught :  
 For sely childe wol alway sone lere.  
 But ay, whan I remembre on this matere;  
 Seint Nicholas stant ever in my prefence;  
 For he so yong to Crist did reverence.

This litel childe his litel book lerning;  
 As he fate in the scole at his primere,  
 He *Alma redemptoris* herde sing,  
 As children lered hir antiphonere :  
 And as he dorst, he drow him nere and nere, 13450  
 And herkened ay the wordes and the note,  
 Til he the firste vers coude al by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,  
 For he so yonge and tendre was of age ;  
 But on a day his felaw gan he pray  
 To expounden him this song in his langage,  
 Or telle him why this song was in usage :  
 This prayde he him to construe and declare,  
 Ful often time upon his knees bare.

His felaw, which that elder was than he, 13460  
 Answerd him thus : This song, I have herd say,  
 Was maked of our blisful Lady fre,

Hire

THE PRIORESSES TALE. 223

Hire to salve, and eke hire for to prey  
To ben our help, and socour whan we dey.  
I can no more expound in this matere :  
I lerne fong, I can but final grammere.

And is this fong maked in reverence  
Of Cristes moder ? said this innocent ;  
Now certes I wol don my diligence  
To conne it all, or Cristemasse be went, 13470  
Though that I for my primer shal be shent,  
And shal be beten thries in an houre,  
I wol it conne, our Ladie for to honoure.

His felaw taught him homeward prively  
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,  
And than he fong it wel and boldely  
Fro word to word accordyng with the note :  
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,  
To scoleward and homeward whan he wente :  
On Cristes moder set was his entente. 13480

As I have said, thurghout the Jewerie  
This litel child as he came to and fro,  
Ful merily than wold he sing and crie,  
*O Alma redemptoris*, ever mo :  
The swetenesse hath his herte perfed so



224 THE PRIORESSES TALE.

Of Cristes moder, that to hire to pray  
He cannot stint of finging by the way.

Our firste fo, the serpent Sathanas,  
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,  
Up swale and said, O Ebraike peple, alas! 13495  
Is this to you a thing that is honest,  
That swiche a boy shal walken as him leste  
In your despit, and sing of swiche sentence,  
Which is again our lawes reverence?

From thennesforth the Jewes han conspired  
This innocent out of this world to chace:  
An homicide therto han they hired,  
That in an aleye had a privee place,  
And as the child gan forthby for to pace,  
This cursed Jew him hent, and held him fast,  
And cut his throte, and in a pit him cast. 13501

I say that in a wardrope they him threwe,  
Wher as thise Jewes purgen hir entraille.  
O cursed folk, of Herodes alle newe,  
What may your evil entente you availle?  
Mordre wol out, certein it wol not faille,  
And namely ther the honour of God shal sprede:  
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.

O martyr

O martyr-fouled in virginitee,  
 Now maist thou finge, and folwen ever in on  
 The white lamb celestial, quod she, 13511  
 Of which the gret Evangelist Seint John  
 In Pathmos wrote, which sayth that they that gon  
 Beforn this lamb, and finge a song al newe,  
 That never fleshly woman they ne knewe.

This poure widewe awaiteth al that night  
 After hire litel childe, and he came nought :  
 For which as sone as it was dayes light,  
 With face pale of drede and besy thought,  
 She hath at scole and elles wher him fought,  
 Til finally she gan so fer aspie, 13521  
 That he last seen was in the Jewerie.

With modres pitee in hire brest enclosed  
 She goth, as she were half out of hire minde,  
 To every place, wher she hath supposid  
 By likelihed hire litel child to finde :  
 And ever on Cristes moder meke and kinde  
 She cried, and at the laste thus she wrought,  
 Among the cursed Jewes she him fought.

She freyneth, and she praieth pitously 13530  
 To every Jew that dwelled in thilke place,

226 THE PRIORESSES TALE.

To telle hire, if hire child went ought forth by :  
 They sayden, Nay ; but Jesu of his grace  
 Yave in hire thought, within a litel space,  
 That in that place after hire sone she cride,  
 Ther he was casten in a pit beside.

O grete God, that parformest thy laude  
 By mouth of innocentes, lo here thy might !  
 This gemme of chafitee, this emeraude,  
 And eke of martirdome the rubie bright, 13540  
 Ther he with throte ycorven lay upright,  
 He *Alma redemptoris* gan to finge  
 So loude, that all the place gan to ringe.

The Cristen folk, that thurgh the strete wente,  
 In comen, for to wondre upon this thing :  
 And hastily they for the provost sente.  
 He came anon withouten taryng,  
 And herieth Crist, that is of heven king,  
 And eke his moder, honour of mankind,  
 And after that the Jewes let he binde. 13550

This child with pitous lamentation  
 Was taken up, finging his song alway :  
 And with honour and gret proceffion,  
 They carien him unto the next abbey.

His



THE PRIORESSES TALE. 227

His moder swouning by the bere lay ;  
Unnethes might the peple that was there  
This newe Rachel bringen fro his bere.

With turment, and with shameful deth eche on  
This provost doth thise Jewes for to sterve,  
That of this morder wiste, and that anon ; 13560  
He n'olde no swiche cursednesse observe :  
Evil shal he have, that evil wol deserve.  
Therefore with wilde hors he did hem drawe,  
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his bere ay lith this innocent  
Beforn the auter while the masse last :  
And after that, the abbot with his covent  
Han spedde hem for to berie him ful fast :  
And whan they holy water on him cast,  
Yet spake this child, whan spreint was the holy water,  
And sang, *o alma redemptoris mater.* 13571

This abbot, which that was an holy man,  
As monkes ben, or elles ought to be,  
This yonge child to conjure he began,  
And said ; O dere child, I halfe thee  
In vertue of the holy Trinitee,  
Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,  
Sith that thy throte is cut to my seming.

Q 2

My

My throte is cut unto my nekke bon,  
 Saide this child, and as by way of kinde 13580  
 I shuld have deyed, ye longe time agon :  
 But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes finde,  
 Wol that his glory last and be in minde,  
 And for the worship of his moder dere,  
 Yet may I sing *o alma* loude and clere.

This welle of mercie, Cristes moder fwete,  
 I loved alway, as after my conning :  
 And whan that I my lif shulde forlete,  
 To me she came, and bad me for to sing  
 This antem veraily in my dying, 13590  
 As ye han herde, and, whan that I had songe,  
 Me thought she laid a grain upon my tonge.

Wherfore I sing, and sing I mote certain  
 In honour of that blisful maiden free,  
 Til fro my tonge of taken is the grain.  
 And after that thus saide she to me ;  
 My litel child, than wol I fetchen thee,  
 Whan that the grain is fro thy tong ytake :  
 Be not agaste, I wol thee not forsake.

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I, 13600  
 His tonge out caught, and toke away the grain ;  
 And

THE PRIORESSES TALE. 229

And he yave up the gost ful softely.  
And whan this abbot had this wonder fein,  
His falte teres trilled adoun as reyne :  
And groff he fell al platte upon the ground,  
And still he lay, as he had ben ybound.

The covent lay eke upon the pavement  
Weping and herying Cristes moder dere.  
And after that they risen, and forth ben went,  
And toke away this martir fro his bere, 13610  
And in a tombe of marble stones clere  
Enclosen they his litel body fwete :  
Ther he is now, God lene us for to mete.

O yonge Hew of Lincoln, flain also  
With curfed Jewes, as it is notable,  
For it n'is but a litel while ago,  
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,  
That of his mercy God so merciable  
On us his grete mercie multiplie,  
For reverence of his moder Marie. 13620

PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

WHAN said was this miracle, every man  
As sober was, that wonder was to see,  
Til that our hofte to jopen he began,  
And than at erst he loked upon me,

Q 3

And



230 PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

And faide thus ; What man art thou ? quod he,  
Thou lokest, as thou woldest finde an hare,  
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.

Approche nere, and loke up merily.  
Now ware you, fires, and let this man have place.  
He in the waste is shapen as wel as I : 13630  
This were a popet in an arme to embrace  
For any woman, smal and faire of face.  
He semeth elvish by his contenance,  
For unto no wight doth he daliance,

Say now fomwhat, fin other folk han faide ;  
Tell us a tale of mirthe and that anon.  
Hofte, quod I, ne be not evil apaide,  
For other tale certes can I non,  
But of a rime I lerned yore agon.  
Ye, that is good, quod he, we shullen here 13640  
Som deintee thing, me thinketh by thy chere.

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

LISTENETH, lordinges, in good entent,  
And I wol tel you *verament*  
Of mirthe and of solas,  
Al of a knight was faire and gent

In

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS. 231

In bataille and in turnament,  
His name was fire Thopas.

Yborne he was in fer contree,  
In Flandres, al beyonde the fee,  
At Popering in the place, 13650  
His father was a man ful free,  
And lord he was of that contree,  
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas was a doughty fwain,  
White was his face as paindemaine  
His lippes red as rose.  
His rudde is like scarlet in grain,  
And I you tell in good certain  
He had a femely nose.

His here, his berde, was like safroun, 13660  
That to his girdle raught adoun,  
His shoon of cordewane ;  
Of Brugges were his hosen broun ;  
His robe was of chekelatoun,  
That coste many a jane.

He coude hunt at the wilde dere,  
And ride on hauking for the rivere

Q 4

With

232 THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

With grey gofhawk on honde :  
Therto he was a good archere,  
Of wraftling was ther non his pere, 13670  
Ther ony ram shuld ftonde,

Ful many a maide bright in bour  
They mourned for him *par amour*,  
Whan hem were bet to flepe ;  
But he was chafte and no lechour,  
And fwete as is the bramble flour,  
That bereth the red hepe.

And so it fell upon a day,  
Forsoth, as I you tellen may,  
Sire Thopas wold out ride ; 13680  
He worth upon his ftede gray,  
And in his hond a launcegay,  
A long fwerd by his fide.

He priketh thurgh a faire forest,  
Therin is many a wilde best,  
Ye bothe buck and hare,  
And as he priked North and Est,  
I telle it you, him had almeste  
Betidde a fory care.

Ther



THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS. 233

Ther springen herbes grete and finale, 13690  
The licoris and the fetewale,  
And many a cloue gilofre,  
And notemuge to put in ale,  
Whether it be moist or stale,  
Or for to lain in cofre.

The briddes fingen, it is no nay,  
The sperhawk and the poppingay,  
That joye it was to here,  
The throftel cok made eke his lay,  
The wode dove upon the spray 13700  
He fang ful loude and clere.

Sire Thopas fell in love-longing  
Al whan he herd the throftel feng.  
And priked as he were wood;  
His faire ftede in his priking  
So swatte, that men might him wring,  
His fides were al blood.

Sire Thopas eke fo wery was  
For priking on the fofte gras,  
So fiers was his corage, 13710  
That doun he laid him in that place  
To maken his ftede fom folace,  
And yaf him good forage.

A, Seinte

A, Seinte Mary, *benedicite*,  
 What aileth this love at me  
 To binde me so fore?  
 Me dremed all this night parde,  
 An elf quene shal my lemman be,  
 And flepe under my gore.

An elf quene wol I love ywis, 13720  
 For in this world no woman is  
 Worthy to be my make || in toun,—  
 All other women I forsake,  
 And to an elf quene I me take  
 By dale and eke by doun.

Into his fadel he clombe anon,  
 And priked over stile and ston  
 An elf quene for to espie,  
 Til he so long had ridden and gone,  
 That he fond in a privee wone 13730  
 The contree of Faerie.

Wherin he foughte North and South,  
 And oft he spied with his mouth  
 In many a forest wilde,  
 For in that contree n'as ther non,  
 That to him dorst ride or gon,  
 Neither wif ne childe,

Til

Til that ther came a gret geaunt,  
 His name was Sire Oliphaunt,  
 A perilous man of dede, 13740  
 He fayde, Child, by Termagaunt,  
 But if thou prike out of myn haunt,  
 Anon I flee thy stede || with mace—  
 Here is the Quene of Faerie,  
 With harpe, and pipe, and fimphonie,  
 Dwelling in this place.

The child fayd, Al so mote I the,  
 To morwe wol I meten thee,  
 Whan I have min armoure,  
 And yet I hope *par ma fay*, 13750  
 That thou shalt with this launcegay  
 Abien it ful foure; || thy mawe  
 Shal I perce, if I may,  
 Or it be fully prime of the day,  
 For here thou shalt be flawe.

Sire Thopas drow abak ful fast;  
 This geaunt at him stones cast  
 Out of a fel staffe sling:  
 But faire escaped child Thopas,  
 And all it was thurgh Goddes grace, 13760  
 And thurgh his faire bering.  
 Yet



236 THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

Yet listeneth, lordings, to my tale,  
 Merier than the nightingale,  
     For now I wol you rounne,  
 How Sire Thopas with fides fmale,  
 Priking over hill and dale,  
     Is comen agein to toune.

His mery men commandeth he,  
 To maken him bothe game and gle,  
     For nedes must he fighte,  
 With a geaunt with hedes three,  
 For paramour and jolitee  
     Of on that fhone ful brighte.

13770

Do come, he sayd, my minestrales  
 And gestours for to tellen tales  
     Anon in min arming,  
 Of romaunces that ben reales,  
 Of popes and of cardinales,  
     And eke of love-longing.

They fet him first the swete win,  
 And mede eke in a mafelin,  
     And real spicerie,  
 Of ginger-bred that was ful fin,  
 And licoris and eke comin,  
     With fuger that is trie.

13780

He

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS. 237

He didde next his white lere  
Of cloth of lake fin and clere  
A breche and eke a fherte,  
And next his fhert an haketon,  
And over that an habergeon, 13790  
For percing of his herte,

And over that a fin hauberk,  
Was all ywrought of Jewes werk,  
Ful strong it was of plate,  
And over that his cote-armoure,  
As white as is the lily floure,  
In which he wold debate.

His sheld was all of gold so red,  
And therin was a bores hed,  
A charboucle beside; 13800  
And ther he swore on ale and bred  
How that the geaunt shuld be ded,  
Betide what so betide.

His jambeux were of cuirbouly,  
His swerdes sheth of ivory,  
His helme of latoun bright,  
His fadel was of rewel bone,  
His bridel as the sonne shone,  
Or as the mone light.

His

238 THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

His spere was of fin cypres, 13810  
 That bodeth werre, and nothing pees,  
 The hed ful sharpe yground.  
 His stede was all dapple gray,  
 It goth an aumble in the way  
 Ful softely and round || in londe —  
 Lo, Lordes min, here is a fit;  
 If ye wol ony more of it,  
 To telle it wol I fond.

Now hold your mouth *pour charite*,  
 Bothe knight and lady fre, 13820  
 And herkeneth to my spell,  
 Of bataille and of chevalrie,  
 Of ladies love and druerie,  
 Anon I wol you tell.

Men speken of romaunces of pris,  
 Of Hornchild, and of Ipotis,  
 Of Bevis, and Sire Guy,  
 Of Sire Libeux, and Pleindamour,  
 But Sire Thopas, he bereth the flour  
 Of real chevalrie. 13830

His goode stede he al bestrode,  
 And forth upon his way he glode,

As



THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS. 239

As sparcle out of bronde ;  
Upon his creft he bare a tour,  
And therin fiked a lily flour,  
God fhilde his corps fro fhonde.

And for he was a knight auntrous,  
He n'olde fleepen in non hous,  
But liggen in his hood,  
His brighte helm was his wanger, 13840  
And by him baited his deftrer  
Of herbes fin and good.

Himfelf drank water of the well,  
As did the knight Sire Percivell  
So worthy under wede,  
Til on a day ———

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

No more of this for Goddes dignitee,  
Quod oure hofte, for thou makeft me  
So wery of thy veray lewedneffe,  
That al fo wifly God my foule bleffe, 13850  
Min eres aken of thy drafty fpeche.  
Now swiche a rime the devil I beteche ;

This

240 PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

This may wel be rime dogerel, quod he.

Why so? quod I, why wolt thou letten me  
More of my tale, than an other man,  
Sin that it is the beste rime I can?

By God, quod he, for plainly at o word,  
Thy drafty riming is not worth a tord:  
Thou dost nought elles but dispendest time.  
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger rime. 13860  
Let see wher thou canst tellen ought in geste,  
Or tellen in prose somwhat at the leste,  
In which ther be som mirthe or som doctrine.

Gladly, quod I, by Goddes swete pine  
I wol you tell a litel thing in prose,  
That oughte liken you, as I suppose,  
Or elles certes ye be to dangerous.  
It is a moral tale vertuous,  
Al be it told somtime in sondry wise  
Of sondry folk, as I shal you devise. 13870

As thus, ye wote that every Evangelist,  
That telleth us the peine of Jesu Crist,  
Ne saith not alle thing as his felaw doth:  
But natheles hir sentence is al soth,  
And alle accorden as in hir sentence,  
Al be ther in hir telling difference:  
For som of hem say more, and som say lesse,  
Whan they his pitous passion expresse;

I mene

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEÛS. 241

I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luke and John,  
But douteles hir sentence is all on. 13880  
Therefore, lordinges all, I you besetche,  
If that ye thinke I vary in my speche,  
As thus, though that I telle som del more  
Of proverbes, than ye han herde before  
Comprehended in this litel tretise here,  
To enforcen with the effect of my matere,  
And though I not the same wordes say  
As ye han herde, yet to you alle I pray  
Blameth me not, for, as in my sentence,  
Shul ye nowher finden no difference 13890  
Fro the sentence of thilke tretise lile,  
After the which this mery tale I write.  
And therefore herkeneth what I shal say,  
And let me tellen all my tale I pray.

THE TALE OF MELIBEÛS.

A YONGE man called Melibeus, mighty  
and riche, begate upon his wif, that called was  
Prudence, a doughter which that called was  
Sophie.

Upon a day befell, that he for his disport is  
went into the felde him to playe. His wif  
and eke his doughter hath he last within his

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hous,



hous, of which the dores weren fast yshette. Four of his olde foos han it espied, and setten ladders to the walles of his hous, and by the windowes ben entred, and beten his wif, and wounded his doughter with five mortal woundes, in five fondry places; this is to say, in hire feet, in hire hondes, in hire eres, in hire nose, and in hire mouth; and lesten hire for dede, and wenten away.

Whan Melibeus retorned was into his hous, and sey al this meschief, he, like a mad man, rending his clothes, gan to wepe and crie.

Prudence his wif, as fer forth as she dorste, besought him of his weping for to stint: but not forthy he gan to crie and wepen ever lenger the more.

This noble wif Prudence remembered hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of love, wheras he saith; he is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe, in the deth of hire childe, til she have wept hire fille, as for a certain time: and than shal a man don his diligence with amiable wordes hire to reconforte and preye hire of hire weping for to [stinte. For which reson this noble wif Prudence suffred hire housbond for to wepe and crie,

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. 243

as for a certain space; and whan she saw hire time, she sayde to him in this wise. Alas! my lord, quod she, why make ye youreself for to be like a fool? Forsothe it apperteineth not to a wise man, to maken swiche a forwe. Your daughter, with the grace of God, shal warish and escape. And al were it so that she right now were dede, ye ne ought not as for hire deth youreself to destroye. Senek saith; the wise man shal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he shulde suffren it in patience, as wel as he abideth the deth of his owen propre persone.

This Melibeus answered anon and saide: what man (quod he) shulde of his weping stinte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jesu Crist, our Lord, himself wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend. Prudence answered; certes wel I wote, attēpre weping is nothing defended, to him that sorweful is, among folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The Apostle Poule unto the Romaines writeth; man shal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepen with swiche folk as wepen. But though attēpre weping be ygranted, outrageous weping certes is defended. Mesure of weping

R. 2

shulde



shulde be considered, after the lore that techeth us Senek. Whan that thy frend is dede (quod he) let not thin eyen to moiste ben of teres, ne to muche drie: although the teres comen to thin eyen, let hem not falle. And whan thou hast forgon thy frend, do diligence to get agein another frend: and this is more wisdom than for to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lorne, for therin is no bote. And therefore if ye governe you by sapience, put away forwe out of youre herte. Remembreth you that Jesus Sirak sayth; a man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth flourishing in his age: but sothly a forweful herte maketh his bones drie. He saith eke thus, that forwe in herte fleeth ful many a man. Salomon sayth, that right as mouthes in the shepes fleese anoien to the clothes, and the smale wormes to the tree, right so anoieith forwe to the herte of man. Wherfore us ought as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the losse of oure goodes temporel, have patience.

Remembre you upon the patient Job, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporel substance, and in his body endured and received ful many a grevous tribulation, yet sayde he thus:



THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. 245

thus: Oure Lord hath yeve it to me, oure Lord hath beraft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right so is it don; ybleffed be the name of oure Lord. To thise foresaide thinges answered Melibeus unto his wif Prudence: all thy wordes (quod he) ben trewe, and therto profitable, but trewely min herte is troubled with this sorwe so grevously, that I n'ot what to don. Let calle (quod Prudence) thyn trewe frendes alle, and thy lineage, which that ben wise, and telleth to hem your cas, and herkeneth what they saye in conseilling, and governe you after hir sentence. Salomon faith; werke all thinges by conseil, and thou shalt never repente.

Than, by conseil of his wif Prudence, this Melibeus let callen a gret congregation of folk, as surgians, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and som of his olde enemies reconciled (as by hir semblant) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther comen some of his neigheboures, that diden him reverence more for drede than for love, as it happeth oft. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise Advocats lerned in the lawe.

And whan thise folk togeder assembled weren, this Melibeus in forweful wise shewed hem his

cas, and by the manere of his speche, it semed that in herte he bare a cruel ire, redy to don vengeance upon his foos, and sodeinly desired that the werre shulde beginne, but natheles yet axed he his conseil upon this matere. A furgien, by licence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up rose, and unto Melibeus sayde, as ye moun here.

Sire, (quod he) as to us furgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher as we ben withholden, and to our patient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many time and ofte, that whan twey men han everich wounded other, o same furgien heleth hem both, wherfore unto our art it is not pertinent to norice werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to the warishing of youre doughter, al be it so that perilously she be wounded, we shuln do so ententif besineffe fro day to night, that with the grace of God, she shal be hole and found, as sone as is possible. Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they saiden a fewe wordes more: that right as maladies ben cured by hir contraries, right so shal man warishe werre. His neigheboures ful of envie, his feined frendes that semed reconciled, and his flaterers, maden

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. 247

maden semblant of weping, and empeired and agregged muchel of this matere, in preysing gretly Melibee of might, of power, of richesse, and of frendes, despising the power of his adversaries : and faiden outrely, that he anon shulde wreken him on his foos, and begynnen werre.

Up rose than an Advocat that was wise, by leve and by conseil of other that were wise, and sayde : Lordinges, the nede for the which we ben assembled in this place, is a ful hevie thing, and an heigh matere, because of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be don, and eke by reson of the grete damages, that in time coming ben possible to fallen for the same cause, and eke by reson of the gret richesse and power of the parties bothe, for the which resons, it were a ful gret peril to erren in this matere. Wherefore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence ; we conseille you, aboven alle thing, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keping of thy propre persone, in swiche a wise that thou ne want non espie ne watche, thy body for to save. And after that, we conseille that in thin hous thou sette suffisant garnison, so that they moun as wel thy body as thy hous defende. But certes for to meeven werre, ne sodenly for to do vengeance,



aunce, we moun not deme in so litle time that  
 it were profitable. Wherefore we axen leiser and  
 space to have deliberation in this cas to deme;  
 for the comune proverbe saith thus; He that  
 sone demeth, sone shal repente. And eke men  
 sain, that thilke juge is wise, that sone under-  
 stondeth a matere, and jugeth by leiser. For al  
 be it so, that al taryng be anoiful, algates it is  
 not to reprove in yeving of jugement, ne in  
 vengeance taking, whan it is suffisant and reson-  
 able. And that shewed our Lord Jesu Crist by  
 ensample, for whan that the woman that was  
 taken in advoutrie, was brought in his presence  
 to knowen what shuld be don with hire persone,  
 al be it that he wist wel himself what that he  
 wolde anwere, yet ne wolde he not anwere  
 sodeinly, but he wolde have deliberation, and in  
 the ground he wrote twies; and by thise causes  
 we axen deliberation: and we shuln than by  
 the grace of God conseille the thing that shal  
 be profitable.

Up sterte than the yonge folk at ones, and  
 the most partie of that compaignie han scorned  
 this olde wise man, and begonnen to make noise  
 and saiden; Right so as while that iren is hot  
 men shulde finite, right so men shuln do wreken  
 hir

## THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

hir wronges, while that they ben freshe and newe: and with loude voys they criden werre, werre. Up rose tho on of thise olde wise, and with his hand made countenaunce that men shuld holde hem stille, and yeve him audience. Lordinges, (quod he) ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wote ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his beginning hath so gret an entring and so large, that every wight may enter whan him liketh, and lightly find werre: but certes what end that shal befall, it is not light to know. For sothly whan that werre is ones begonne, ther is ful many a child unborne of his moder, that shal sterue yong, by cause of thilke werre, other elles live in sorwe, and dien in wretchednesse: and therefore or that any werre be begonne, men must have gret conseil and gret deliberation. And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by resons, wel nie alle at ones begonne they to rise, for to breken his tale, and bidden him ful oft his wordes for to abregge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that listen not heren his wordes, his sermon hem anoieth. For Jesus Sirak sayth, that musike in weping is a noious thing. This is to sayn, as mucche availleth to  
speke



speke beforen folk to which his speche anoieth, as to singe beforen him that wepeth. And whan this wise man saw that him wanted audience, al shamefast he sette him doun agein. For Salomon saith: ther as thou ne mayst have non audience, enforce thee not to speke. I see wel, (quod this wise man) that the comune proverbe is soth, that good conseil wanteth, whan it is most nede.

Yet had this Melibeus in his conseil many folk, that prively in his ere conseilled him certain thing, and conseilled him the contrary in general audience. Whan Melibeus had herd that the grettest partie of his conseil were accorded that he shulde make werre, anon he consented to hire conseilling, and fully affermed hir sentence. Than dame Prudence, whan that she saw how that hire hosbonde shope him for to awreke him on his foos, and to beginne werre, she in ful humble wise, whan she saw hire time, fayde him these wordes: my lord, (quod she) I you besече as hertly as I dare and can, ne haste you not to faste, and for alle guerdons as yeve me audience. For Piers Alphonse sayth; who so that doth to thee outhur good or harme, haste thee not to quite it, for in this wise thy  
frend



THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. 251

frend wol abide, and thin enemy shal the lenger live in drede. The proverbe sayth; he hasteth wel that wisely can abide: and in wikked hast is no profite.

This Melibee answered unto his wif Prudence: I purpose not (quod he) to werken by thy conseil, for many causes and reasons: for certes every wight wold hold me than a fool; this is to sayn, if I for thy conseilling wolde change thinges, that ben ordeined and affirmed by so many wise men. Secondly, I say, that all women ben wicke, and non good of hem all. For of a thousand men, saith Salomon, I found o good man: but certes of alle women good woman found I never. And also certes, if I governed me by thy conseil, it shulde seme that I had yeve thee over me the maistrie: and God forbede that it so were. For Jesus Sirak sayth, that if the wif have the maistrie, she is contrarious to hire husband. And Salomon sayth; never in thy lif to thy wif, ne to thy childe, ne to thy frend, ne yeve no power over thy self: for better it were that thy children axe of thee thinges that hem nedeth, than thou see thy self in the handes of thy children. And also if I wol werche by thy conseilling, certes  
it

it must be somtime secree, til it were time that it be knowen: and this ne may not be, if I shulde be conseilled by thee. [For it is written; the janglerie of women ne can no thing hide, save that which they wote not. After the Philosophre sayth; in wikked conseil women venquithen men: and for thise resons I ne owe not to be conseilled by thee.]

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with gret pacience, had herd all that hire housbonde liked for to say, than axed she of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise. My lord, (quod she) as to your first reson, it may lightly ben answerd: for I say that it is no folie to chaunge conseil whan the thing is chaunged, or elles whan the thing semeth otherwise than it semed afore. And moreover I say, though that ye have sworne and behight to performe your emprise, and nevertheles ye weive to performe thilke same emprise by just cause, men shuld not say therfore ye were a lyer, ne forsworn: for the book sayth, that the wise man maketh no lesing, whan he turneth his corage for the better. And al be it that your emprise be established and ordeined by gret multitude of folk, yet thar you not accomplish thilke ordinance but you liketh:

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liketh : for the trouthe of thinges, and the profit, ben rather founden in fewe folk that ben wise and ful of reson, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man cryeth and clattereth what him liketh : sothly swiche multitude is not honest. As to the second reson, wheras ye say, that alle women ben wicke : save your grace, certes ye despise alle women in this wise, and he that all despiseth, as saith the book, all displeth. And Senek saith, that who so wol have sapience, shal no man dispise, but he shal gladly teche the science that he can, without presumption or pride : and swiche thinges as he nought can, he shal not ben ashamed to lere hem, and to enquire of lesse folk than himself. And, Sire, that ther hath ben ful many a good woman, may lightly be preved : for certes, Sire, our Lord Jesu Crist n'olde never han descended to be borne of a woman, if all women had be wicked. And after that, for the gret bountee that is in women, our Lord Jesu Crist, whan he was risen from deth to lif, appered rather to a woman than to his Apostles. And though that Salomon sayde, he found never no good woman, it folweth not therfore, that all women be wicked : for though that he ne found

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no good woman, certes many another man hath founde many a woman ful good and trewe. Or elles peraventure the entent of Salomon was this, that in foveraine bountee he found no woman; this is to say, that ther is no wight that hath foveraine bountee, save God alone, as he himself recordeth in his Evangelies. For ther is no creature so good, that him ne wanteth somwhat of the perfection of God that is his maker. Your thridde reson is this; ye say that if that ye governe you by my conseil, it shulde seme that ye had yeve me the maistrie and the lordship of your person. Sire, save your grace, it is not so; for if so were that no man shulde be conseilled but only of hem that han lordship and maistrie of his person, men n'olde not be conseilled so often: for sothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois whether he wol werke after that conseil or non. And as to your fourth reson, ther as ye sain that the janglerie of women can hide thinges that they wot not; as who so sayth, that a woman can not hide that she wote; Sire, thise wordes ben understonde of women that ben janglereffes and wicked; of which women men sain that three thinges driven a man out of his hous, that is to say,

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say, smoke, dropping of raine, and wicked wives. And of swiche women Salomon sayth, That a man were better dwell in desert, than with a woman that is riotous. And, sire, by your leve, that am not I; for ye have ful often assaied my gret silence and my gret patience, and eke how wel that I can hide and hele thinges, that men oughten secretly to hiden. And sothly as to your fifthe reson, wheras ye say, that in wicked conseil women venquishen men; God wote that thilke reson stant here in no stede: for understondeth now, ye axen conseil for to do wickednesse; and if ye wol werken wickednesse, and your wif restraineth thilke wicked purpos, and overcometh you by reson and by good conseil, certes your wif ought rather to be preised than to be blamed. Thus shulde ye understonde the philosophre that sayth, In wicked conseil women venquishen hir husbondes. And ther as ye blamen all women and hir resons, I shal shewe you by many ensamples, that many women have ben ful good, and yet ben, and hir conseil hole-some and profitable. Eke som men han sayd, that the conseil of women is either to dere, or elles to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a woman be bad, and hire conseil vile and nought



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nought worth, yet han men founden ful many a good woman, and discrete and wise in conseilling: Lo, Jacob, thurgh the good conseil of his mother Rebecke, wan the benifon of his father, and the lordship over all his brethren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelt, out of the honde of Holofern, that had it beseged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigail delivered Nabal hire housbond fro David the king, that wolde han slain him, and appeased the ire of the king by hire wit, and by hire good conseilling. Hester by hire conseil enhaunced gretly the peple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the king. And the same bountee in good conseilling of many a good woman moun men rede and tell. And further more, whan that oure Lord had created Adam oure forme father, he sayd in this wise; it is not good to be a man allone: make we to him an helpe semblable to himself. Here moun ye see that if that women weren not good, and hir conseil good and profitable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither han wrought hem, ne called hem helpe of man, but rather confusion of man. And ther sayd a clerk ones in two vers; what is better than gold? Jaspre. What is better than



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than jaspere? wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? woman. And what is better than a good woman? nothing. And, Sire, by many other reſons moun ye ſeen, that many women ben good, and hir conſeil good and profitable. And therfore; Sire, if ye wol troſte to my conſeil, I ſhal reſtore you your doughter hole and ſound: and I wol don to you ſo muche, that ye ſhuln have honour in this cas.

Whan Melibee had herd the wordes of his wiſ Prudence, he ſayd thus: I ſe wel that the word of Salomon is ſoth; for he ſaith, that wordes, that ben ſpoken diſcretly by ordinaunce, ben honiecombes, for they yeven ſwetenefſe to the ſoule, and holſomneſſe to the body. And, wiſ, becauſe of thy ſwete wordes, and eke for I have preved and aſſaied thy grete ſapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conſeil in alle thing.

Now, Sire, (quod dame Prudence) and ſin that ye vouchefaſe to be governed by my conſeil, I wol enforme you how that ye ſhuln governe yourſelf, in cheſing of youre conſeillours. Ye ſhuln firſt in alle your werkes mekely beſechen to the heigh God, that he wol be your conſeillour: and ſhapeth you to ſwiche entente

that he yeve you conseil and comferte, as taughte Tobie his sone; at alle times thou shalt blesse God, and preie him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thy conseils ben in him for evermore. Seint James eke sayth; if any of you have nede of sapience, axe it of God. And afterwarde, than shullen ye take conseil in yourself, and examine wel your owen thoughtes, of swiche thinges as you thinketh that ben best for your profit. And than shuln ye drive fro your herte three thinges that ben contrarious to good conseil; that is to sayn, ire, coveitise, and hastinesse.

First, he that axeth conseil of himself, certes he must be withouten ire, for many causes. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in himself, he weneth alway that he may do thing that he may not do. And secondly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that may not wel deme, may not wel conseille. The thridde is this; he that is irous and wroth, as sayth Senek, ne may not speke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stirreth other folk to anger and to ire. And eke, Sire, ye must drive coveitise out of your herte. For the Apostile sayth, that coveitise

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is the rote of alle harmes. And trosteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but only to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that ne may never ben accomplished; for ever the more haboundance that he hath of richesse, the more he desireth. And, Sire, ye must also drive out of youre herte hastinesse: for certes ye ne moun not deme for the beste a soden thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye must avise you on it ful ofte: for as ye have herde herebeforn, the commune proverbe is this; he that sone demeth, sone repenteth.

Sire, ye ne be not alway in like disposition, for certes som thing that somtime semeth to you that it is good for to do, another time it semeth to you the contrarie.

And whan ye han taken conseil in yourself, and han demed by good deliberation swiche thing as you semeth beste, than rede I you that ye kepe it secree. Bewreye not your conseil to no persone, but if so be that ye wenen fikerly, that thurgh youre bewreying youre condition shal ben to you more profitable. For Jesus Sirak saith: neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discover not thy secree, ne thy folie: for they woln yeve you audience and loking, and sup-



portation in youre presence, and scorne you in youre absence. Another clerk sayth, that scarcely shalt thou finden any persone that may kepe thy conseil secrely. The book sayth; while that thou kepest thy conseil in thin herte, thou kepest it in thy prison: and whan thou bewreyest thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And therefore you is better to hide your conseil in your herte, than to preye him to whom ye han bewreyed youre conseil, that he wol kepe it close and stille. For Seneca sayth: if so be that thou ne mayst not thin owen conseil hide, how darest thou preyen any other wight thy conseil secrely to kepe? but natheles, if thou wene fikerly that thy bewreying of thy conseil to a persone wol make thy condition to stonden in the better plight, than shalt thou telle him thy conseil in this wise. First, thou shalt make no semblant whether thee were lever pees or werre, or this or that; ne shewe him not thy will ne thin entente: for troste wel that communly these conseillours ben flaterers, namely the conseillours of grete lordes, for they enforcen hem alway rather to speken plesant wordes enclining to the lordes lust, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable: and therefore men sayn,  
that

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that the riche man hath felde good conseil, but if he have it of himself. And after that thou shalt consider thy frendes and thin enemies. And as touching thy frendes, thou shalt consider which of hem ben most feithful and most wise, and eldest and most appreved in conseilling: and of hem shalt thou axe thy conseil, as the cas requireth.

I say, that first ye shuln clepe to youre conseil youre frendes that ben trewe. For Salomon saith: that right as the herte of a man deliteth in favour that is swote, right so the conseil of trewe frendes yeveth swetenesse to the soule, He sayth also, ther may nothing be likened to the trewe frend: for certes gold ne silver ben not so muche worth as the good will of a trewe frend. And eke he sayth, that a trewe frend is a strong defence; who so that it findeth, certes he findeth a gret tresor. Than shuln ye eke consider if that your trewe frendes ben discrete and wise: for the book saith, axe alway thy conseil of hem that ben wise. And by this same reson shuln ye clepen to youre conseil youre frendes that ben of age, swiche as han seyn and ben expert in many thinges, and ben appreved in conseillings. For the book sayth,



in olde men is al the sapience, and in longe time the prudence. And Tullius sayth, that grete thinges ne ben not ay accomplished by strengthe, ne by deliverneffe of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science: the which three thinges ne ben not feble by age, but certes they enforcen and encrefen day by day. And than shuln ye kepe this for a general reule. First ye shuln clepe to youre conseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salomon saith; many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese thee on to be thy conseilour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe, thou mayest afterwarde tell it to mo folk, if it be nede. But loke alway that thy conseilours have thilke three conditions that I have sayd before; that is to say, that they be trewe, wise, and of olde experience. And werke not alway in every nede by on conseilour allone: for somtime behoveth it to be conseilled by many. For Salomon sayth; salvation of thinges is wher as ther ben many conseilours.

Now sith that I have told you of which folk ye shulde be conseilled: now wol I teche you which conseil ye ought to eschue. First ye shuln  
eschue



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eschue the conseilling of fooles; for Salomon sayth, Take no conseil of a fool: for he ne can not conseille but after his owen lust and his affection. The book sayth, the propretee of a fool is this: He troweth lightly harne of every man, and lightly troweth all bountee in himself. Thou shalt eke eschue the conseilling of all flaterers, swiche as enforcen hem rather to preisen youre persone by flaterie, than for to tell you the sothfastnesse of thinges.

Wherfore Tullius sayth, Among alle the pestilences that ben in frendship, the gretest is flaterie. And therefore it is more nede that thou eschue and drede flaterers, than any other peple. The book saith, Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flatering preisers, than fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith thee sothes. Salomon saith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare to cacchen innocentes. He sayth also, He that speketh to his frend wordes of swetenesse and of plesaunce, he setteth a net before his feet to cacchen him. And therefore sayth Tullius, Encline not thin eres to flaterers, ne take no conseil of wordes of flaterie. And Caton sayth, Avise thee wel, and eschue wordes of swetenesse and of plesaunce. And eke thou shalt eschue the conseil-

ling of thin olde enemies that ben reconciled. The book sayth, that no wight retourneth safely into the grace of his oldeemie. And Ysop sayth, Ne trost not to hem, to which thou hast somtime had werre or enmittee, ne telle hem not thy conseil. And Senek telleth the cause why. It may not be, sayth he, ther as gret fire hath long time endured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour of warmnesse. And therefore saith Salomon, In thin olde foo trost thou never. For fikerly, though thinemie be reconciled, and maketh thee chere of humilitee, and louteth to thee with his hed, ne trost him never: for certes he maketh thilke feined humilitee more for his profite, than for any love of thy persone; because that he demeth to have victorie over thy persone by swiche feined contenance, the which victorie he might not have by strif of werre. And Peter Alphonse sayth; Make no felawship with thin olde enemies, for if thou do hem bountee, they wollen perverte it to wickednesse. And eke thou must eschue the conseilling of hem that ben thy iervaunts, and beren thee gret reverence: for paraventure they fein it more for drede than for love. And therefore saith a philosopher in this wise; Ther is no wight parfitly trewe



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trewe to him that he to fore dredeth. And Tullius sayth, Ther n'is no might so gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of folk that ben dronkelewe, for they ne can no conseil hide. For Salomon sayth, Ther n'is no privetee ther as regneth dronkenesse. Ye shuln also have in suspect the conseilling of swiche folk as conseilte you o thing prively, and conseilte you the contrarie openly. For Cassiodore sayth, That it is a manere sleighte to hinder his enemy whan he sheweth to don a thing openly, and werketh prively the contrary. Thou shalt also have in suspect the conseilling of wicked folk, for hir conseil is alway ful of fraude. And David sayth; Blisful is that man that hath not solwed the conseilling of shrewes. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of yonge folk, for hir conseilling is not ripe, as Salomon saith.

Now, Sire, fith I have shewed you of which folk ye shullen take youre conseil, and of which folk ye shullen eschue the conseil, now wol I teche you how ye shuln examine your conseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examining than of your conseilours, ye shuln confidre many thinges.

Alderfirst



Alderfirst thou shalt confidre that in thilke thing that thou purposest, and upon what thing that thou wolt have conseil, that veray trouthe be said and conserved; this is to say, telle trewely thy tale: for he that sayth false, may not wel be conseilled in that cas, of which he lieth. And after this, thou shalt confidre the thinges that accorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if reson accord therto, and eke if thy might may atteine therto, and if the more part and the better part of thin conseillours accorden therto or no. Than shalt thou confidre what thing shal folwe of that conseil-ling; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profite, or damage, and many other thinges: and in alle thinges thou shalt chese the beste, and weive alle other thinges. Than shalt thou confidre of what roote is engendred the matere of thy conseil, and what fruit it may conceive and engendre. Thou shalt eke confidre alle the causes, from whennes they ben sprongen. And whan thou hast examined thy conseil, as I have said, and which partie is the better and more profitable, and hast appreved it by many wise folk and olde, than shalt thou confidre, if thou mayst performe it and maken of it a good ende. For  
certes

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certes reson wol not that any man shulde beginne a thing, but if he mighte performe it as him oughte: ne no wight shulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he might not beren it. For the proverbe sayth; he that to muche embraceth distreineth litel. And Caton saith; assay to do swiche thinges as thou hast power to don, lest the charge oppresse thee so sore, that thee behoveth to weive thing that thou hast begonne. And if so be that thou be in doute, whether thou mayst performe a thing or non, chese rather to suffre than to beginne. And Peter Alphonse sayth; If thou hast might to don a thing, of which thou must repente, it is better nay than ya: this is to sayn, that thee is better to holde thy tonge stille than for to speke. Than mayst thou understonde by stronger reasons, that if thou hast power to performe a werk, of which thou shalt repente, than is thee better that thou suffre than beginne. Wel sain they that defenden every wight to assaye a thing of which he is in doute, whether he may performe it or non. And after whan ye han examined youre conseil, as I have said beforne, and knownen wel that ye moun performe your emprise, conferme it than sadly til it be at an ende.

Now



Now is it reson and time that I shewe you whan, and wherfore, that ye moun chaunge your conseil, withouten reprove. Sothly, a man may change his purpos and his conseil, if the cause cefeth, or whan a newe cas betideth. For the lawe saith, that upon thinges that newly betiden, behoveth newe conseil. And Seneca sayth; if thy conseil is comen to the eres of thin enemies, chaunge thy conseil. Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil, if so be that thou find that by errour, or by other cause, harme or damage may betide. Also if thy conseil be dishoneste, other elles come of dishoneste cause, chaunge thy conseil: for the lawes sain, that all behestes that ben dishoneste ben of no value: and eke, if so be that it be impossible; or may not goodly be performed or kept.

And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is affermed so strongly, that it may not be chaunged for no condition that may betide, I say that thilke conseil is wicked.

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wif dame Prudence, answered in this wise. Dame, quod he, as yet unto this time ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I shal governe me in the chesing  
and



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and in the withholding of my conseilours: but now wold I fain that ye wold condescend in especial, and telle me how liketh you, or what semeth you by oure conseilours that we han chosen in oure present nede.

My lord, quod she, I beseeche you in alle humbleste, that ye wol not wilfully replie again my resons, ne distempre your herte, though I speke thing that you displese; for God wote that, as in min entente, I speke it for your beste, for youre honour and for youre profite eke, and sothly I hope that youre benignitee wol taken it in patience. And trosteth me wel, quod she, that youre conseil as in this cas ne shulde not (as to speke proprely) be called a conseil, but a motion or a meving of folie, in which conseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise.

First and forward, ye han erred in the assembling of youre conseilours: for ye sholde first han cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after ye mighte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadde be nede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your conseil a gret multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to here. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye shulde han only cleped to youre conseil youre trewe frendes, olde  
and

and wise, ye han cleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flaterers, and enemies reconciled, and folk that don you reverence withouten love. And eke ye han erred, for ye han brought with you to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse, the which three thinges ben contrary to every conseil honest and profitable : the which three thinges ye ne han not anientified or destroyed, neither in youreself ne in youre conseilours, as you ought. Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseilours youre talent and youre affections to make werre anon, and for to do vengeaunce, and they han espied by youre wordes to what thing ye ben enclined : and therefore han they conseilled you rather to youre talent, than to youre profite. Ye han erred also, for it semeth that you sufficeeth to han ben conseilled by thise conseilours only, and with litel avis, wheras in so high and so gret a nede, it had ben necessarie mo conseilours, and more deliberation to performe your emprise. Ye han erred also, for ye han not examined your conseil in the foresaid manere, ne in due manere, as the cas requireth. Ye han erred also, for ye han maked no division betwix youre conseilours ; this is to fayn, betwix youre trewe frendes and youre feined conseilours :



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lours: ne ye han not knowe the wille of your trewe frendes, olde and wise, but ye han cast alle hir wordes in an hochepôt, and enclined your herte to the more part and to the greter nombre, and ther be ye condescended; and fith ye wot wel that men shuln alway finde a greter nombre of fooles than of wise men, and therfore the conseillings that ben at congregations and multitudes of folk, ther as men take more regard to the nombre, than to the sapience of perfonas, ye seen wel, that in fwiche conseillings fooles han the maistrise. Melibeus answered and said agein: I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou hast told me herebeforne, that he n'is not to blame that chaungeth his conseil in certain cas, and for certain and just causes, I am al ready to chaunge my conseil right as thou wolt devise. The proverbe sayth; for to don sinne is mannish, but certes for to persevere long in sinne is werke of the Divil.

To this sentence answered anon dame Prudence, and saide; examineth (quod she) wel your conseil, and let us see the which of hem han spoken most resonably, and taught you best conseil. And for as mucche as the examination is necessarie, let us beginne at the Surgiens and

at



at the Physiciens, that first spoken in this mater. I say that Physiciens and Surgiens han sayde you in youre conseil discretly, as hem oughte: and in hir speche faiden ful wisely, that to the office of hem apperteineth to don to every wight honour and profite, and no wight to anoye, and after hir craft to don gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce. And, Sire, right as they han answered wisely and discretly, right so rede I that they be highly and soverainly guerdoned for hir noble speche, and eke for they shulden do the more ententif besineffe in the curation of thy dere doughter. For al be it so that they ben youre frendes, therfore shullen ye not suffren, that they serve you for nought, but ye oughte the rather guerdone hem, and shewe hem youre largeffe. And as touching the proposition, which the Physiciens entreteden in this cas, this is to fain, that in maladies, that a contrarie is warished by another contrarie; I wold fain knowe how ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence. Certes, quod Melibeus, I understond it in this wise; that right as they han don me a contrarie, right so shulde I don hem another; for right as they han venged hem upon me and  
don

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don me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon hem, and don hem wrong, and than have I cured a contrarie by another.

Lo, lo, quod dame Prudence, how lightly is every man enclined to his owen desire and his owen plesaunce! certes (quod she) the wordes of the Phyficiens ne shulden not han ben understonden in that wise; for certes wickednesse is not contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but they ben semblable: and therfore a vengeaunce is not warished by another vengeaunce, ne a wrong by another wrong, but everich of hem encrefeth and aggreggeth other. But certes the wordes of the Phyficiens shulden ben understonde in this wise; for good and wickednesse ben two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and suffraunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges: but certes, wickednesse shal be warished by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And hereto accordeth Seint Poule the Apostle in many places: he sayth, ne yelde not harme for harme, ne wicked speche for wicked speche, but do wel to him that doth to thee harme, and blesse him that saith to thee

harne. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wol I speke to you of the conseil, which that was yeven to you by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and old folke, that sayden alle by on accord as ye han herd beforen, that over alle thinges ye shuln do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to warnefore your house: and saiden also, that in this cas you oughte for to werchen ful avisely and with gret deliberation. And, Sire, as to the first point, that toucheth the keping of youre persone, ye shuln understond, that he that hath werre, shal ever more devoutly and mekely preien beforen alle thinges, that Jesu Crist of his mercie wol han him in his protection, and ben his soveraine helping at his nede: for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept suffisantly, withoute the keping of oure lord Jesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the Prophete David that sayth: if God ne kepe the citee, in idel waketh he that kepeth it. Now, Sire, than shuln ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben apprevd and yknowe, and of hem shuln ye axen helpe, youre persone for to kepe. For Caton saith: if thou  
have



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have nede of helpe, axe it of thy frendes, for  
ther n'is non so good a Phyficien as thy trewe  
frend. And after this than shuln ye kepe you  
fro alle straunge folk, and fro lieres, and have  
alway in suspect hir compaignie. For Piers  
Alphonse sayth: ne take no compaignie by the  
way of a straunge man, but if so be that thou  
have knowen him of lenger time: and if so be  
that he falle into thy compaignie paraventure  
withouten thin assent, enquire than, as subtilly  
as thou maist, of his conversation, and of his lif  
beforne, and feine thy way, saying thou wolt  
go thider as thou wolt not go: and if he bere  
a spere, hold thee on the right side, and if he  
bere a swerd, hold thee on his left side. And  
after this than shuln ye kepe you wisely from  
all swiche manere peple as I have sayed be-  
fore, and hem and hir conseil eschue. And  
after this than shuln ye kepe you in swiche  
manere, that for any presumption of youre  
strenge, that ye ne despise not, ne account not  
the might of your adversary so lite, that ye let  
the keping of youre persone for your pre-  
sumption; for every wise man dredeth his ene-  
mie. And Salomon sayth; welful is he that  
of alle hath drede; For certes he that thurgh

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the hardinesse of his herte, and thurgh the hardinesse of himself, hath to gret presumption, him shal evil betide. Than shuln ye evermo countrewaite emboyssments, and alle espiaile. For Senek sayth, that the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes; ne he ne falleth into perils, that perils eschueth. And al be it so, that it seme that thou art in fiker place, yet shalt thou alway do thy diligence in keping of thy persone; this is to sayn, ne be not negligent to kepe thin persone, not only fro thy grettest enemy, but also fro thy leste enemy. Senek sayth; a man that is wel avised, he dredeth his leste enemy. Ovide sayth, that the litel wessel wol flee the gret boll and the wilde hart. And the book sayth; a litel thorne may prikke a king ful fore, and a litel hound wol hold the wilde bore. But natheles, I say not thou shalt be so coward, that thou doute wher as is no drede. The book faith, that som men [han taught hir deceivour, for they han to muche dreded] to be deceived. Yet shalt thou drede to be empoysoned; and [therfore shalt thou] kepe thee fro the compaignie of scorners: for the book sayth, with scorners ne make no compaignie, but flee hir wordes as venime.

Now

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Now as to the second point, wheras youre wise conßeillours conßeilled you to warneftore your hous with gret diligence, I wolde fain knowe how that ye understode thilke wordes, and what is youre sentence.

Melibeus answered and faide; Certes I understond it in this wise, that I shal warneftore min hous with toures, fwiche as han castelles and other manere edifices, and armure, and artelries, by which thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and defenden, that min enemies shuln ben in drede min hous for to approche.

To this sentence answered anon Prudence. Warneftoring (quod she) of heighe toures and of grete edifices, is with grete costages and with grete travaille; and whan that they ben accomplished, yet ben they not worth a stre, but if they ben defended by trewe frendes, that ben olde and wise. And understonde wel, that the greteste and strongeste garneson that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is, that he be beloved with his subgets, and with his neigheboures. For thus sayth Tullius, that ther is a maner garneson, that no man may venquish ne discomfite, and that is



a lord to be beloved of his citizeins, and of his peple.

Now, Sire, as to the thridde point, wheras youre olde and wise conseillours sayden, that you ne oughte not sodeinly ne hastily proceden in this nede, but that you oughte purveyen and appareilen you in this cas, with gret diligence and gret deliberation; trewely, I trowe, that they sayden right wisely and right soth. For Tullius sayth: in every nede er thou beginne it, appareile thee with gret diligence. Than say I, that in vengeaunce taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warnestoring, er thou beginne, I rede that thou appareile thee therto, and do it with gret deliberation. For Tullius sayth, that longe appareiling tofore the bataille, maketh short victorie. And Cassiodorus sayth: the garneson is stronger, whan it is longe time avised.

But now let us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neigheboures, swiche as don you reverence withouten love; youre olde enemies reconciled; your flatereres, that conseilled you certain thinges prively, and openly conseilled you the contrarie; the yonge folk also, that conseilled you to venge you, and to make werre anon. Certes, Sire, as I have sayde before,

forne, ye han gretly erred to han cleped swiche maner folk to youre conseil, which conseillours ben ynough reproved by the resons aforesaid. But natheles, let us now descende to the special. Ye shul first proceden after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes the trouthe of this matere or of this conseil nedeth not diligently to enquire, for it is wel wist, which they ben that han don to you this trespas and vilanie, and how many trespassours, and in what manere they han don to you all this wrong, and all this vilanie. And after this, than shuln ye examine the second condition, which that the same Tullius addeth in this matere. For Tullius putteth a thing, which that he clepeth consenting: this is to sayn, who ben they, and which ben they, and how many, that consenten to thy conseil in thy wilfulnesse, to don hastif vengeance. And let us confidre also who ben they, and how many ben they, and which ben they, that consenteden to youre adversaries. As to the first point, it is wel known which folk they be that consenteden to youre wilfulnesse. For trewely, all tho that conseileden you to maken sodein werre, ne ben not youre frendes. Let us now confidre which ben they that ye holden so gretly youre frendes, as to

youre persone : for al be it so that ye be mighty  
 and riche, certes ye ne ben but allone : for certes  
 ye ne han no child but a doughter, ne ye ne han  
 no brethren, ne cofins germains, ne non other  
 nigh kinrede, wherfore that youre enemies for  
 drede shulde stinte to plede with you, or to de-  
 stroye youre persone. Ye knowen also, that your  
 richeffes moten ben dispended in diverse parties ;  
 and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne  
 wollen taken but litel regard to venge youre  
 deth. But thin enemies ben three, and they  
 han many brethren, children, cofins, and other  
 nigh kinrede : and though so were, that thou  
 haddest slain of hem two or three, yet dwellen  
 ther ynow to wreken hir deth, and to flee thy  
 persone. And though so be that youre kinrede  
 be more stedefast and fiker than the kin of your  
 adversaries, yet natheles youre kinrede is but a  
 fer kinrede ; they ben but litel fibbe to you, and  
 the kin of youre enemies ben nigh fibbe to hem.  
 And certes as in that, hir condition is better than  
 youre. Than let us confidre also of the con-  
 seilling of hem that conseilled you to take sodein  
 vengeance, whether it accorde to reson : and  
 certes, ye knowe wel, nay ; for as by right and  
 reson, ther may no man taken vengeance on no  
 wight,



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wight, but the juge that hath the jurisdiction of it, whan it is ygraunted him to take thilke vengeance hastily, or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepeth consenting, thou shalt confidre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnesse, and to thy conseillours: and certes, thou mayest wel say, that nay; for fikerly, as for to speke proprely, we moun do nothing but only swiche thing as we moun don rightfully: and certes rightfully ye ne mowe take no vengeance, as of youre propre auctoritee. Than mowe ye sen that your power ne consenteth not, ne accordeth not to youre wilfulnesse. Now let us examine the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth consequent. Thou shalt uuderstonde, that the vengeance that thou purposest for to take, is the consequent, and therof folweth another vengeance, peril, and werre, and other damages withouten nombre, of which we ben not ware, as at this time. And as touching the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth engendring, thou shalt confider, that this wrong which that is don to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin enemies, and of the vengeance taking upon that wold engender another vengeance, and  
muchel

muchel forwe and waſting of richeſſes, as I ſayde ere.

Now, ſire, as to the point, that Tullius clepeth cauſes, which that is the laſt point, thou ſhalt underſtonde, that the wrong that thou haſt received, hath certaine cauſes, which that clerkes clepen *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *cauſa longinqua*, and *cauſa propinqua*, this is to ſayn, the fer cauſe, and the nigh cauſe. The fer cauſe is almighty God, that is cauſe of alle thinges; the ner cauſe, is thin three enemies; the cauſe accidental was hate; the cauſe material, ben the five woundes of thy doughter; the cauſe formal, is the maner of hir werking, that broughten ladders, and clomben in at thy windowes; the cauſe final was for to ſlee thy doughter; it letted not in as muche as in hem was. But for to ſpeke of the fer cauſe, as to what ende they ſhuln come, or what ſhal finally betide of hem in this cas, ne can I not deme, but by conjecting and ſuppoſing: for we ſhuln ſuppoſe, that they ſhuln come to a wicked ende, becauſe that the book of Decrees ſayth: Selden or with gret peine ben cauſes ybrought to a good ende, whan they ben badly begonne.

Now, Sire, if men wold axen me, why that God ſuffred men to do you this vilanie, certes I  
can

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can not wel answer, as for no sothfastnesse. For the Apostle sayth, that the sciences, and the jugements of oure Lord God Almighty ben ful depe; ther may no man comprehend ne serche hem suffisantly. Natheles, by certain presumptions and conjectings, I hold and beleve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of right-wisenesse, hath suffered this betide, by just cause resonable.

Thy name is Melibee, this is to sayn, a man that drinketh hony. Thou hast dronke so muche hony of swete temporel richeffes, and delices, and honours of this world, that thou art drunken, and hast forgotten Jesu Crist thy creatour: thou ne hast not don to him swiche honour and reverence as thee ought, ne thou ne hast wel ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that sayth: Under the honey of the goodes of thy body is hid the venime that sleth the soule. And Salomon sayth: If thou hast founden hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and poure. And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath tourned away fro thee his face, and his eres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred, that thou hast ben punished in the manere that thou hast ytrespased.



ytrespased. Thou hast don sinne again oure Lord Crist, for certes the three enemies of mankind, that is to sayn, the flesh, the fend, and the world, thou hast suffred hem entre into thin herte wilfully, by the windowes of thy body, and hast not defended thyself suffisantly agein hir assautes, and hir temptations, so that they han wounded thy soule in five places, this is to sayn the dedly finnes that ben entred into thyn herte by thy five wittes : and in the same manere our Lord Crist hath wold and suffred, that thy three enemies ben entred into thyn hous by the windowes, and han ywounded thy doughter in the foresayd manere.

Certes, quod Melibee, I see wel that ye enforce you muchel by wordes to overcomen me, in swiche manere, that I shal not venge me on mine enemies, shewing me the perils and the evils that mighten falle of this vengeance : but who so wolde confidre in alle vengeancees the perils and evils that mighten sue of vengeance taking, a man wold never take vengeance, and that were harme : for by the vengeance taking ben the wicked men dissevered fro the goode men. And they that han will to do wickednesse, restrainen hir wicked purpos, whan they  
 fen

sen the punishing and the chastising of the trespassours. [To this answered dame Prudence : Certes, quod she, I graunte you that of vengeance taking cometh muche evil and muche good ; but vengeance taking apperteineth not to everich on, but only to juges, and to hem that han the jurisdiction over the trespassours ;] and yet say I more, that right as a singuler persone finneth in taking vengeance of another man, right so finneth the juge, if he do no vengeance of hem that it han deserved. For Senek sayth thus : That maister (he sayth) is good, that preveth shrewes. And Cassiodore faith : A man dredeth to do outrages, whan he wot and knoweth, that it displeth to the juges and soveraines. And another sayth : The juge that dredeth to do right, maketh men shrewes. And Seint Poule the Apostle sayth in his Epistle, whan he writeth unto the Romaines, that the juges beren not the spere withouten cause, but they beren it to punishe the shrewes and misdoers, and for to defende the goode men. If ye wiln than take vengeance of youre enemies, ye shuln retourne or have your recours to the juge, that hath the jurisdiction upon hem, and he shal punishe hem, as the lawe axeth and requireth.

A, sayd

A, sayd Melibee, this vengeance liketh me nothing. I bethink me now, and take hede how that fortune hath norished me fro my childhode, and hath holpen me to passe many a stronge pas : now wol I assaye hire, trowing, with Goddes helpe, that she shal helpe me my shame for to venge.

Certes, quod Prudence, if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shuln not assaye fortune by no way : ne ye ne shuln not lene or bowe unto hire, after the wordes of Senek ; for thinges that ben folily don, and tho that ben don in hope of fortune, shuln never come to good ende. And as the same Senek sayth : The more clere and the more shining that fortune is, the more brotel and the soner broke she is. Trusteth not in hire, for she n'is not stedefast ne stable : for whan thou trowest to be most fiker and seure of hire helpe, she wol faille and deceive thee. And wheras ye sayn, that fortune hath norished you fro youre childhode, I say that in so muchel ye shuln the lesse truste in hire, and in hire wit. For Senek saith : What man that is norished by fortune, she maketh him a gret fool. Now than sin ye desire and axe vengeance, and the vengeance, that is don after the lawe and before the juge, ne liketh



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liketh you not, and the vengeaunce, that is don in hope of fortune, is perilous and uncertain, than have ye non other remedie, but for to have your recours unto the soveraine juge, that vengeth alle vilanies, and wronges; and he shal venge you, after that himself witnesseth, wheras he saith; Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I shal do it.

Melibeus answered: If I ne venge me of the vilanie that men han don to me, I sompne or warne hem, that han don to me vilanie, and alle other, to do me another vilanie. For it is written; If thou take no vengeaunce of an olde vilany, thou sompnest thin adversaries to do thee a newe vilanie: and also for my suffraunce, men wolden do me so muche vilanie, that I might neither bere it ne susteine; and so shulde I ben put and holden over lowe. For som men sain, In muchel suffring shul many thinges falle unto thee, which thou shalt not mowe suffre.

Certes, quod Prudence, I graunte you wel, that overmuchel suffraunce is not good, but yet ne folweth it not therof, that every persone to whom men don vilanie, shuld take of it vengeaunce: for that apperteineth and longeth all only to the juges, for they shul venge the vilanies and injuries:

injuries : and therefore tho two auctoritees, that ye han sayd above, ben only understonden in the juges : for whan they suffren overmuchel the wronges and vilanies to be don, withouten punishing, they sompne not a man all only for to do newe wronges, but they commaunden it : al so as a wise man sayth, that the juge that correcteth not the finner, commaundeth and biddeh him do sinne. And the juges and soveraines mighten in hir lond so muche suffre of the shrewes and misdoers, that they shulden by swiche suffraunce, by proces of time, wexen of swiche power and might, that they shuld putte out the juges and the soveraines from hir places, and atte laste maken hem lese hir lordshippes.

But now let us putte, that ye have leve to venge you : I say ye be not of might and power, as now to venge you : for if ye wol maken comparison unto the might of youre adversaries, ye shuln finde in many thinges, that I have shewed you er this, that hir condition is better than youres, and therefore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre and be patient.

Forthermore ye knowen wel, that after the commune saw, it is a woodnesse, a man to strive with a stronger, or a more mighty man than he is himself ;

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himself; and for to strive with a man of even strengthe, that is to say, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to strive with a weker man, it is folie; and therefore shulde a man flee striving, as muchel as he mighte. For Salomon sayth: It is a gret worship to a man to kepe him fro noise and strif. And if it so happe, that a man of greter mighte and strengthe than thou art, do thee grevaunce: studie and besie thee rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senek sayth, that he putteth him in a grete peril, that striveth with a greter man than he is himself. And Caton sayth; If a man of higher estat or degree, or more mighty than thou, do thee anoye or grevance, suffre him: for he that ones hath greved thee, may another time releve thee and helpe thee. Yet sette I cas, ye have bothe might and licence for to venge you, I say that ther ben ful many thinges that shuln restraine you of vengeance taking, and make you for to encline to suffre, and for to han patience in the wronges that han ben don to you. First and forward, if ye wol confidre the defautes that ben in youre owen persone, for which defautes God hath suffred you have this tribulation, as I have sayd to you herebeforne. For



the Poete sayth, that we oughten patiently taken the tribulations that comen to us, whan that we thinken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And Seint [Gregorie sayth, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defaultes and of his finnes, the peines and the tribulations that he suffereth, semen the lesse unto him. And in as muche as him thinketh his finnes more hevy and grevous, in so muche semeth his peine the lighter and the esier unto him. Also ye owen to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Peter in his Epistles. Jesu Crist (he saith) hath suffred for us, and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and sue him, for he dide never sinne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Also the gret patience, which Seintes that ben in Paradis han had in tribulations that they han suffred, withouten hir desert or gilt, oughte muchel stirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye shulde enforce you to have patience, considering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and sone passed ben and gon, and the joye that a  
man

man seketh to han by patience in tribulations is perdurable; after that the Apostle sayth in his Epistle; the joye of God, he sayth, is perdurable, that is to sayn, everlasting. Also troweth and beleveth stedfastly, that he n'is not wel ynorished ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Salomon sayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is knowen by patience. And in another place he sayeth; that he that is patient, governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salomon saith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noises, and the patient man attempreth and stilleth hem. He saith also, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right strong. And he that may have the lordshipe of his owen herte, is more to preise, than he that by his force or strengthe taketh gret citees. And therefore sayth Seint James in his Epistle, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye seken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pees, unto the time it be venged. And al be it so, that it was gret peril to min

enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeance upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir corage : and therefore me thinketh men oughten not reprove me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret exceffe, that is to sayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye sayn your will and as you liketh ; but in no cas of the world a man shulde not don outrage ne exceffe, for to vengen him. For Cassiodore sayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therefore ye shuln venge you after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and not by exceffe, ne by outrage. And also if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye finnen. And therfore sayth Senek, that a man shal never venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting : certes ye say soth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte swiche attemperaunce in his defence,



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fence, that men have no cause ne mater to re-  
preve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and  
excesse, for elles were it againe reson. Parde ye  
knownen wel, that ye maken no defence as now,  
for to defende you, but for to venge you: and  
so sheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre  
dede attemprely: and therefore me thinketh that  
patience is good. For Salomon sayth, that he  
that is not patient, shal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan  
a man is impatient and wrothe of that that touch-  
eth him not, and that apperteineth not unto him,  
though it harme him it is no wonder. For the  
lawe faith, that he is coupable that entremeteth  
or medleth with swiche thing, as apperteineth not  
unto him. And Salomon faith, that he that  
entremeteth of the noyse or strif of another man,  
is like to him that taketh a straunge hound by  
the eres: for right as he that taketh a straunge  
hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the  
hound, right in the same wise, it is reson that he  
have harme, that by his impatience medleth him  
of the noyse of another man, wheras it apper-  
teineth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that  
this dede, that is to sayn, my greif and my dis-  
ese, toucheth me right nigh. And therefore

U 3                      though

though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mer-  
 vaille : and (saying your grace) I cannot see that  
 it might gretly harme me, though I took venge-  
 aunce, for I am richer and more mighty than  
 min enemies ben : and wel knowe ye, that by  
 money and by having grete possessions, ben alle  
 thinges of this world governed. And Salomon  
 sayth, that alle thinges obeye to money,

Whan Prudence had herd hire husbond avaunte  
 him of his richesse and of his money, dis-  
 preising the power of his adversaries, she spake  
 and sayd in this wise : Certes, dere Sire, I graunte  
 you that ye ben riche and mighty, and that  
 richesses ben good to hem that han wel ygeten  
 hem, and that wel conne usen hem, For right  
 as the body of a man may not liven withouten  
 soul, no more may it liven withouten tem-  
 porel goodes, and by richesses may a man  
 gete him grete frendes. And therfore sayth  
 Pamphilus : If a netherdes doughter (he sayth)  
 be riche, she may chese of a thousand men,  
 which she wol take to hire husbond : for of a  
 thousand men on wol not forsaken hire ne re-  
 fusen hire. And this Pamphilus saith also : If  
 thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be  
 right riche, thou shalt finde a gret nombre of  
 felawes

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felawes and frendes ; and if thy fortune chaunge,  
that thou wexe poure, farewel frendshipe and  
felawshipe, for thou shalt be al allone withouten  
any compaignie, but if it be the compaignie of  
poure folk. And yet sayth this Pamphilus more-  
over, that they that ben bond and thralle of  
linage, shuln be made worthy and noble by  
richeffes. And right so as by richeffes ther  
comen many goodes, right so by poverte come  
ther many harmes and eviles : for gret poverte  
constreineth a man to do many eviles. And  
therfore clepeth Cassiodore poverte the moder  
of ruine, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrow-  
ing or falling down. And therfore sayth Piers  
Alfonse : on of the gretest adversitees of this  
world, is whan a free man by kinde, or of birthe,  
is constreined by poverte to eten the almesse of  
his enemye. And the same sayth Innocent in on  
of his bookes ; he sayth, that forweful and mis-  
happy is the condition of a poure begger, for if  
he axe not his mete, he dieth for hunger, and if  
he axe, he dieth for shame : and algates neces-  
sityte constreineth him to axe. And therfore  
sayth Salomon, that better it is to die, than for  
to have swiche poverte. And as the same Salo-  
mon sayth : Better it is to die of bitter deth, than



for to liven in swiche wise. By thise resons that I have said unto you, and by many other resons that I coude saye, I graunte you that richeffes beñ good to hem that wel geten hem, and to hem that wel usen tho richeffes: and therfore wol I shewe you how ye shuln behave you in gadering of youre richeffes, and in what manere ye shuln usen hem.

First, ye shuln geten hem withouten gret desir, by good leiser, sokingly, and not over hastily, for a man that is to desiring to gete richeffes, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle other eviles. And therfore sayth Salomon: He that hasteth him to befily to wexe riche, he shal be non innocent. He sayth also, that the richeffe that hastily cometh to a man, sone and lightly goeth and passeth from a man, but that richeffe that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alway and multiplieth. And, Sire, ye shulen gete richeffes by youre wit and by youre travaille, unto youre profite, and that withouten wrong or harme doing to any other persone. For the lawe sayth: Ther maketh no man himself riche, if he do harme to another wight; this is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himself riche, unto the harme  
of

of another persone. And Tullius sayth, that no forwe, ne no drede of deth, ne nothing that may falle unto a man, is so muchel ageins nature, as a man to encrese his owen profite, to harne of another man. And though the grete men and the mighty men geten richeffes more lightly than thou, yet shalt thou not ben idel ne flowe to do thy profite, for thou shalt in alle wise flee idelnesse. For Salomon sayth, that idelnesse techeth a man to do many eviles. And the same Salomon sayth, that he that travailleth and besiet him to tillen his lond, shal ete bred: but he that is idel, and casteth him to no besinesse ne occupation, shal falle into poverte, and die for hunger. And he that is idel and flow, can never find covenable time for to do his profite. For ther is a versifiour sayth, that the idel man excuseth him in Winter, because of the grete cold, and in Sommer by encheson of the hete. For thise causes, sayth Caton, waketh, and enclineth you not over muchel to slepe, for over muchel reste noriseth and causeth many vices. And therefore sayth Seint Jerome; Doeth som good dedes, that the devil which is oure enemye, ne finde you not unoccupied, for the devil ne taketh not lightly unto his werking swiche as he findeth occupied in goode werkes.

Than



Than thus in geting richeffes ye musten flee idelnesse. And afterward ye shuln usen the richeffes, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in swiche manere, that men holde you not to scarce ne to sparing, ne fool-large, that is to say, over large a spender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, because of his scarcitee and chincherie, in the same wise is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Caton; Use (sayth he) the richeffes that thou hast ygeten in swiche manere, that men have no matere ne cause to calle thee nother wretche ne chinche; for it is a gret shame to a man to have a poure herte and a riche purse. He sayth also: the goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure, that is to sayn, spende mesurably; for they that folily wasten and dispenden the goodes that they han, whan they han no more propre of hir owen, than they shapen hem to take the goodes of another man. I say than that ye shuln flee avarice, using youre richeffes in swiche manere, that men sayn not that your richeffes ben yberied, but that ye have hem in youre might, and in youre welding. For a wise man repreveth the avaricious man, and sayth thus in two vers. Wherto and why berieth a  
man



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man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knoweth wel, that nedes must he die, for deth is the end of every man, as in this present lif? and for what cause or encheson joineth he him, or knitteth he him so fast unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mown not disseveren him, or departen him from his goodes, and knoweth wel, or oughte to knowe, that whan he is ded, he shal nothing bere with him out of this world? And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that the avaricious man is likened unto helle, that the more it swalweth, the more desir it hath to swalwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eschue to be called an avaricious man or chinche, as wel shulde ye kepe you and governe you in swiche a wise, that men calle you not fool-large. Therfore saith Tullius: The goodes of thin hous ne shulde not ben hid ne kept so close, but that they might ben opened by pitee and debonairetee; that is to sayn, to yeye hem part that han gret nede; ne, thy goodes shulden not ben so open, to be every mannes goodes. Afterward, in geting of youre riches, and in using of hem, ye shuln alway have three thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye shuln have God in youre herte, and for

no

no richesse ye shuln do no thing, which may in any manere displese God that is your creatour and maker. For after the word of Salomon, it is better to have a litel good with love of God, than to have muchel good, and lese the love of his Lord God. And the Prophete sayth, That better it is to ben a good man, and have litel good and trefor, than to be holden a shrewe, and have grete richesses. And yet I say forthermore, that ye shulden alway do youre besynesse to gete you richesses, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the Apostle sayth, that ther n'is thing in this world of which we shulden have so gret joye, as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnesse. And the Wise man sayth: The substance of a man is ful good, whan sinne is not in mannes conscience. Afterward, in geting of youre richesses, and in using of hem, ye must have gret besynesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salomon sayth, that beter it is, and more it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete richesses: and therefore he sayth in another place: Do grete diligence (saith Salomon) in keping of thy frendes, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abide with thee, than any trefor,

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for, be it never so precious. And certes, he shulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and besynesse, to kepen his good name. And Cassiodore sayth, that it is a signe of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth and desireth to have a good name. And therefore sayth Seint Augustine, that ther ben two thinges that arn right necessarie and nedeful; and that is good conscience, and good los; that is to sayn, good conscience to thin owen persone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward. And he that trosteth him so muchel in his good conscience, that he despiseth and setteth at nought his good name or los, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name, n'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I shewed you how ye shulden do in geting richeffes, and how ye shuln usen hem: and I see wel that for the trust that ye han in youre richeffes, ye wiln meve werre and bataille. I conseille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in trust of youre richeffes, for they ne sufficen not werres to mainteine. And therefore sayth a Philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algates han werre, shal never have suffisaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter dispences



dispendes must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon saith, that the greter riches that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your riches ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in other manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite: for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therefore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therefore every man shulde gretly drede

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drede werres to beginne: and becaufe that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as fone is the gret man flain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the fecond book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben adventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a fpere, as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore fhulde a man flee and efchue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon fayth: He that loveth peril, fhall falle in peril.

After that Dame Prudence had fpoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and faide: I fee wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre refons, that ye han fhewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your confeil, how I fhall do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I confeille you that ye acorde with youre adverfaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James fayth in his Epiftle, that by concorde and pees, the finale richeffes wexen grete, and by debat and difcorde grete richeffes fallen down. And ye knowen wel, that on of the greteft and moft foveraine thing that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And  
therfore

therefore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshiþe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat and brige by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshiþe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlineße engendreth dispreiþing, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt of wraþe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other, feyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchasid the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse  
and



and do goodnesse; seke peef and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mis-happe and mislide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displefed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by fwete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more

worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevvy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

Than said Mélibee; I shal not conne answer unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseilte you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebeforen, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries,

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faries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more feurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire hufbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repent-aunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that



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wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encrefen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therefore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and besече you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we confideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therefore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevynesse and swiche wrath to

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us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enioynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therefore, noble ladie, we beseeche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroyed, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and judgement, and in the might and power of his enemy: for Salomon sayth: levethe me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strengre reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseilte you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know veraily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne covetous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshippe and honour. Forthermore I know wel,

and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre nobleffe to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men, she bad hem go agein prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir finnes and trespass, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I as-  
fente



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sente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of cure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han wel and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be fired to venge you and make werre: right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise; and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besineffe and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste,

and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therefore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourned was indede. And whan thise trespassours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compaignie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And

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And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes. And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witneseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee

of



of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, beseeching you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespass and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious gyltes and trespass into wickednesse; al be it that curtedly and dampnably we han agylte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and judgement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the causes aforesaid; which thinges ordeined, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to  
disherite

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disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his besynesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renouvelle his good name: for it is writen, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you  
upon

upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misufeth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoin hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was befor. And therefore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye must deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therefore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appefeth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce, in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saith: he overcometh



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cometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal be do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had heard the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespassed unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreinet me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeye you outrely alle the offences, injuries,

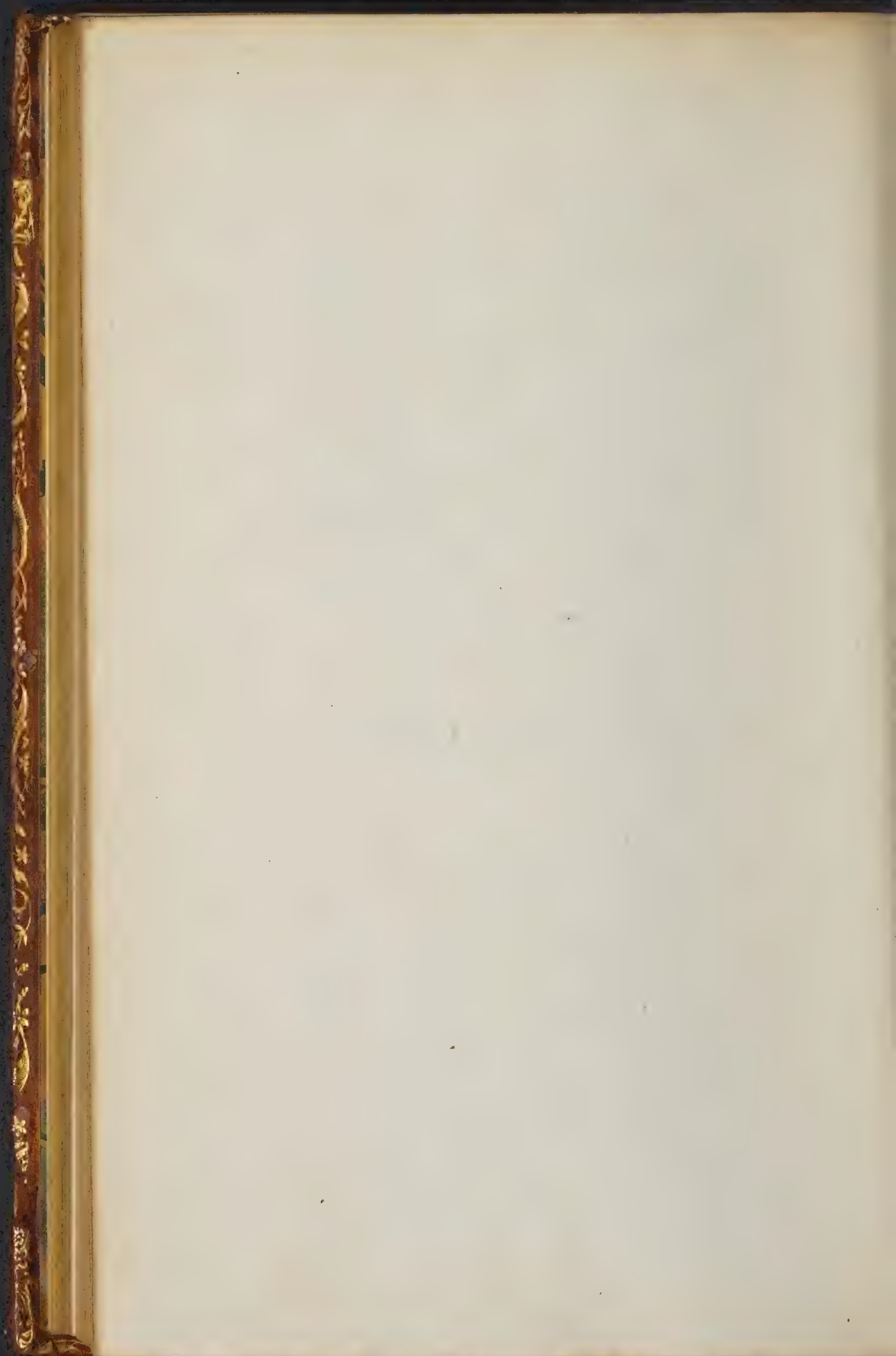
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injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein  
me and mine, to this effect and to this ende,  
that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time  
of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we  
han trespased to him in this wretched world:  
for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the  
finnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the  
sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so  
merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes,  
and bringen us to the blisse that never hath  
ende. *Amen.*

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









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